

A digital painting of a woman with long, flowing pink hair, looking down and to the left. She is wearing a white turtleneck and a dark, strapless top. Her right hand is visible, holding a piece of dark fabric. The background is a soft, warm gradient.

# 2dartist.

3dtotal.com

117

Issue 117 | September 2015

## The Art of Loish

We interview Lois van Baarle  
a.k.a. Loish about her first  
art book and Kickstarter  
campaign

### +plus

- 10 of the best digital images
- **Captivating Bungee environments**
- Design an alien power source
- **and much more!**

# Editor's Letter



**ANNIE MOSS**  
Junior Editor

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## Welcome to 2dartist issue 117!

This month's issue features an interview with videogame artist Sung Choi. We also get to speak to the amazing Loish about her upcoming artbook and her successful Kickstarter campaign.

We also have tutorials on speed painting and photo manipulation, while our 'Altering environments' series concludes with a tutorial from Kristian Llana on how to paint the eye of a storm. You can also challenge yourself to create a sci-fi scene from a difficult perspective with Pablo Carpio's air vehicle tutorial.

There is also plenty of inspiration on offer from Zac Retz' amazing sketchbook, while young illustrator Leilei Huang shows us her incredibly calming work. Plus, we have our selection of 10 of the best recent images from our gallery. Enjoy!

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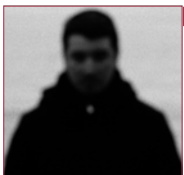
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# Contributors



### SUNG CHOI

Sung Choi (Sunghun Choi) is an award-winning concept artist from South Korea currently working at Bungie in Washington. He specializes in world design and illustration for the entertainment industry.



### FLORIAN AUPETIT

Florian Aupetit is a French 25-year-old art director and 3D generalist at the Parisian studio *Monsieur K*. He also works as a freelance illustrator and concept artist, and shows us some of his fascinating illustrations.



### LEILEI HUANG / LINALIHUANG

Leilei Huang is an award winning illustrator and graphic designer based in Edinburgh, UK. She recently graduated from a Master's degree, and would eventually like to create her own books.



### LOIS VAN BAARLE (A.K.A. LOISH)

Lois van Baarle, known as Loish, is a highly popular freelance illustrator and animator from the Netherlands. Since graduating in 2009, her artwork has gained a dedicated international following.



### ROSTYSLAV ZAGORNOV

Rostyslav Zagornov is an environment concept artist for 4A-Games Ltd., Malta. Originally from Ukraine, Rostyslav first started creating digital art four years ago when a friend sold him a Wacom tablet.



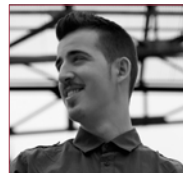
### IOAN DUMITRESCU

Ioan Dumitrescu is a freelance concept artist from Romania. He recently worked on projects for Sony and Blur, and his work has featured in games, commercials and on book covers.



### KRISTIAN LLANA

Kristian Llana is a freelance concept artist and illustrator originally from Albania, Europe. He is currently based in New York and works for companies in the entertainment industry, specializing in film and videogame art.



### PABLO CARPIO

Since completing a Fine Arts degree, Pablo Carpio has worked as a freelance artist based in Madrid. He loves that the fresh style of digital art re-imagines the epic Romanticism of art.



### WOULD YOU LIKE TO SUBMIT TO 2DARTIST?

We are always looking for tutorial artists, gallery submissions, potential interviewees, writers and more. For more information, please send a link to your work to: [annie@3dtotal.com](mailto:annie@3dtotal.com).



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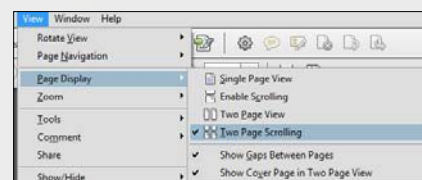
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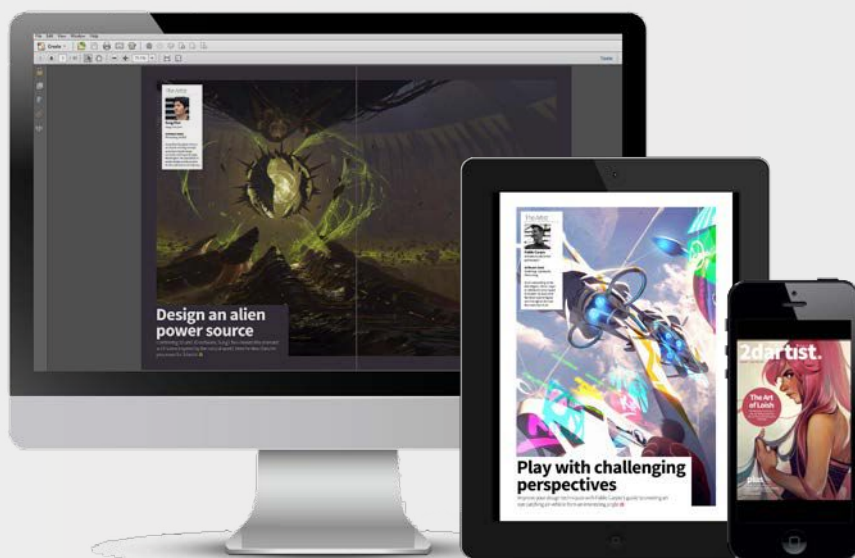
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# Contents Issue 117



## 006\_ Captivating Bungie environments

Bungie concept artist Sung Choi talks about finding inspiration in the world around him

## 022\_ Discover luminescent paintings

Explore the fascinating illustrations of the talented Florian Aupetit

## 036\_ Immersive illustration

Illustrator Leilei Huang shows us her beautifully tranquil work, about loneliness and isolation

## 047\_ Narrative digital sketches

Animator Zac Retz showcases the sketches which inspire his narrative work

## 060\_ The Art of Loish

We interview Lois van Baarle, a.k.a. Loish about her first art book and Kickstarter campaign

## 070\_ The Gallery

Sergey Pervukhin and Alexey Egorov showcase their work in this month's 10 of the best

## 084\_ Photo manipulate a monster

Learn how to turn your self portrait into a chilling creature with this tutorial

## 092\_ Speed paint an ancient ruin

Ioan Dumitrescu demonstrates how to quickly create an historic environment

## 102\_ Step into the eye of the storm

Learn how to capture the eye of a storm in this environment painting tutorial

## 112\_ Play with challenging perspectives

Pablo Carpio designs a sci-fi airship from an exciting perspective

## 122\_ Design an alien power source

Sung Choi describes how he created an organic sci-fi scene in his artwork *The Heart*

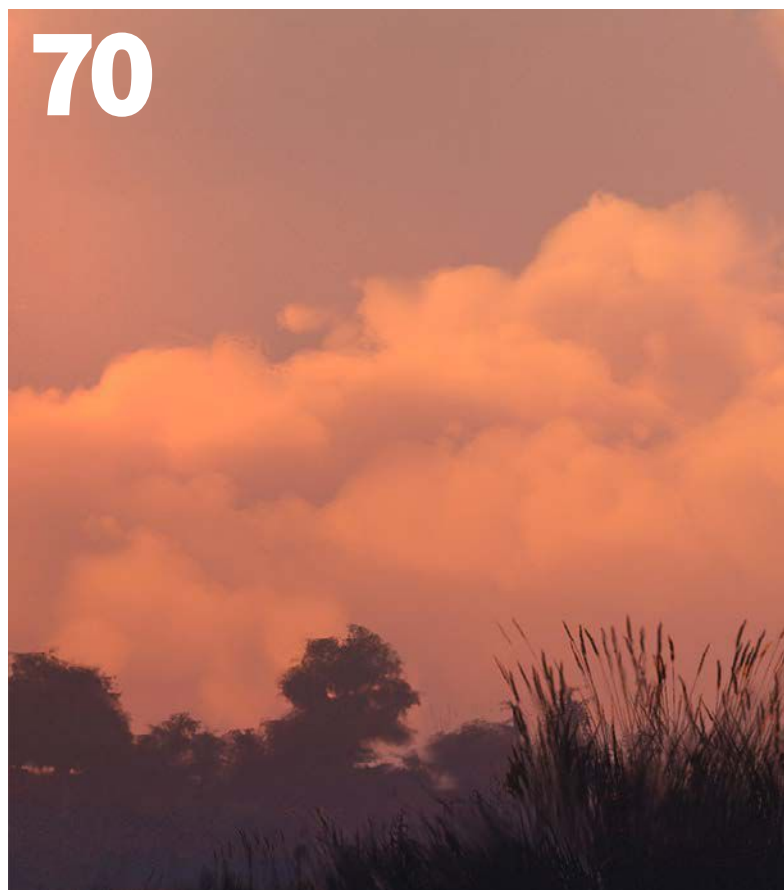
## 130\_ Digital Art Master: Brian Sum

See how the videogame concept artist created his image *Working Droid*

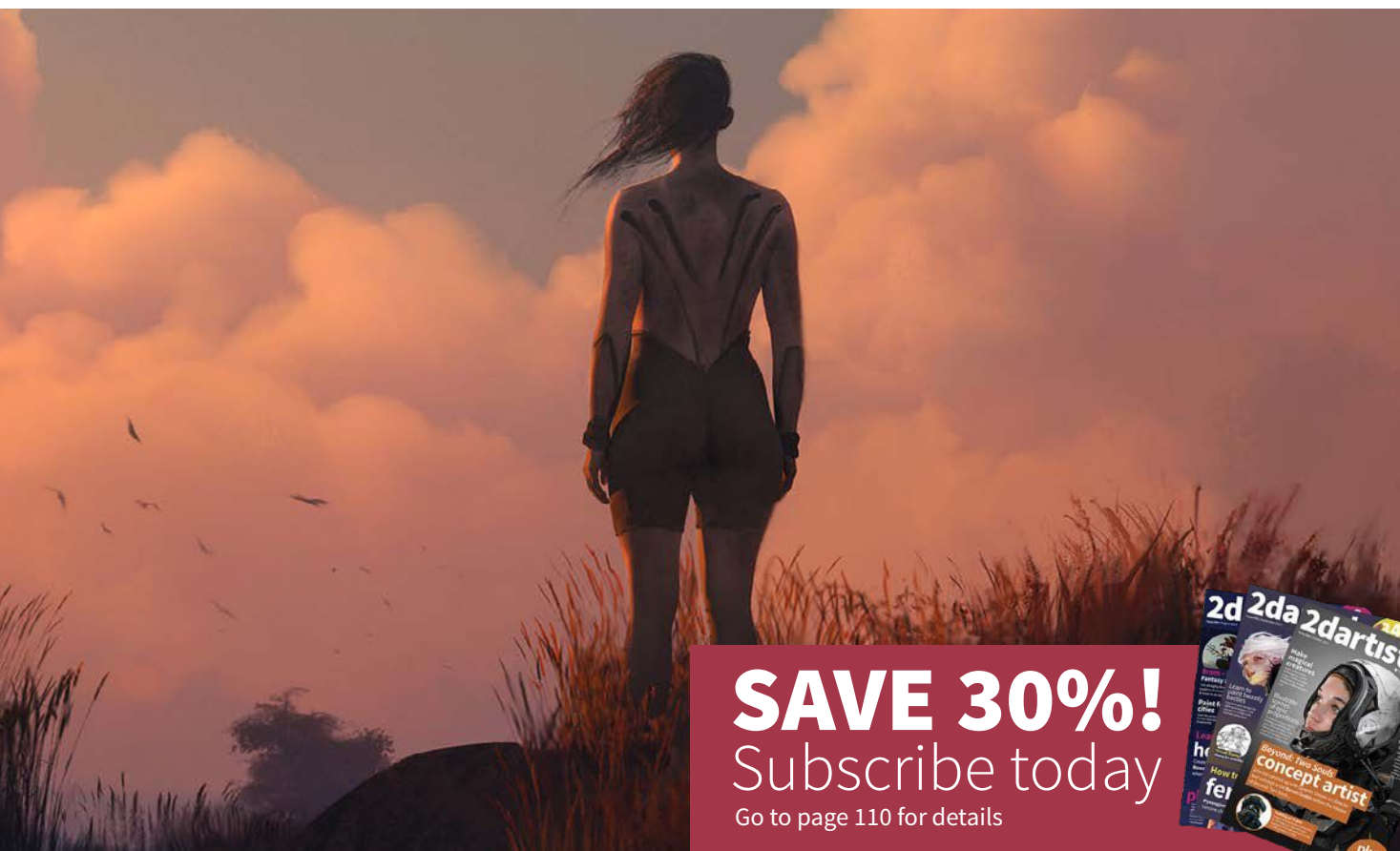
# 22



# 70







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## The Artist



**Sung Choi**  
sung-choi.com

**Interviewed by:**  
Annie Moss

Sung Choi (Sunghun Choi) is an award-winning concept artist from South Korea currently working at Bungie in Washington. He specializes in world design and illustration for the entertainment industry.

# Captivating Bungie environments

Sung Choi, concept artist at Bungie, talks to 2dartist about his latest project, overcoming creative challenges, and how moving to the US has changed his work ▶







The winner of numerous awards for his 2D work, including a Gold Award from Spectrum 22 and third place World Champion at Fest Challenge 2014, Sung Choi has fashioned a successful career as a concept artist from his life-long passion for art. From early childhood drawings of monsters, Choi has progressed to become an artist for AAA videogame company Bungie.

His work is greatly inspired by his exploration of the outside world, and he has a background in environment design which he has successfully incorporated into his extensive body of work. Here, Sung talks to 2dartist about his inspirations, the challenges he has faced and what makes a project fun.

**2dartist:** Hello Sung, thank you for talking to us today! Could you kick things off by telling us a bit about yourself, your background and how you became a concept artist?

**Sung Choi:** Hi, readers of 2dartist. It's my honor to meet you guys though this interview. I hope you like my works and find this interview helpful.

My art driven life started with my sketchbook when I was eight years old. I liked to scribble things I saw in animations and films. It is hard to tell how this happened but there was nothing more enjoyable than drawing monsters and dinosaurs during that time. Drawing stayed as a hobby, until I decided

**“I always try to keep the shapes from my initial sketches that are done in my sketchbook or Photoshop when I have to go through procedural processes with certain tools”**

to apply to a high school where they taught 2D animation and drawings.

My life in high school was very inspiring with lots of talented friends. Also, that was the time when I first found out about game art. That's when I first started to make digital paintings. Although I wasn't very good at the time, learning new techniques excited me and kept me going.

**2da:** You moved from South Korea to Los Angeles to study, did you notice a big cultural difference? Did this move have an effect on the way you work, or your style?

**SC:** The most significant effect it had on my work was on my understanding of foundations such as color and light, value, and composition. When I was in Korea, I couldn't get a chance to focus on studying the foundations. All I did was draw something I thought would be cool.

During that time, I was a big fan of some western traditional paintings that had rich color and realistic

lighting and mood. Some of my favorite illustrators, like Phil Hale and Ashley Wood, were my biggest inspirations who inspired me to study more.

While I was in Los Angeles, attending Otis College of Art and Design, I had been spending most of my time on learning foundations such as opaque color and values, light, and design.

Understanding the facts of lighting and color took me a very long time. However my work improved much more as I kept on questioning what was around me, and painting outside.

The great part about studying in the US was I could find a ton of great artists I'd never known before. This experience made me broaden my visual library with lots of inspiration.

**2da:** What are your preferred tools to work with? Are there any brushes you find yourself using repeatedly?

**SC:** I mostly use Photoshop, though it depends on the pieces I have to create. I also use MODO, KeyShot and others. I have a brush set that includes some from Jama Jurabaev, Jamie Jones, Maciej Kuciara, Eytan Zana, and five brushes I created. I have my favorite ones, but I always try to use as many as possible to have a variety of touches.

When I have to visualize something complex such as architecture or machinery, I use MODO for modeling,

● A sunset in the hills © Sunghun Choi





texturing, and lighting. I always try to keep the shapes from my initial sketches that are done in my sketchbook or Photoshop when I have to go through procedural processes with certain tools.

**2da:** You have said in the past that you like to take inspiration from nature. What is it about the natural world that captures your imagination?

**SC:** Landscape is deadly attractive sometimes. For example, when I see cool misty clouds scattering around the hills after rain, I feel that I have to capture the scene by painting them. It is a living reference and an inspiration. Plus, outdoor landscapes also taught me how to draw.

It all started when I tried Digital Plein Air painting during school. During that time I didn't have a proper outdoor digital painting class so I had to try by myself.

Luckily I found Shaddy Safadi's great tutorials for outdoor painting, so gathering my toolset was much easier. Then I went outside and tried to paint some cool hills and clouds. Of course, it was super hard at first.

I failed so many times to just paint the exact color. It was sad that I couldn't capture the beautiful shot that was in front of me, but as I kept on trying, I learned about simplifying and how to make shapes more attractive.

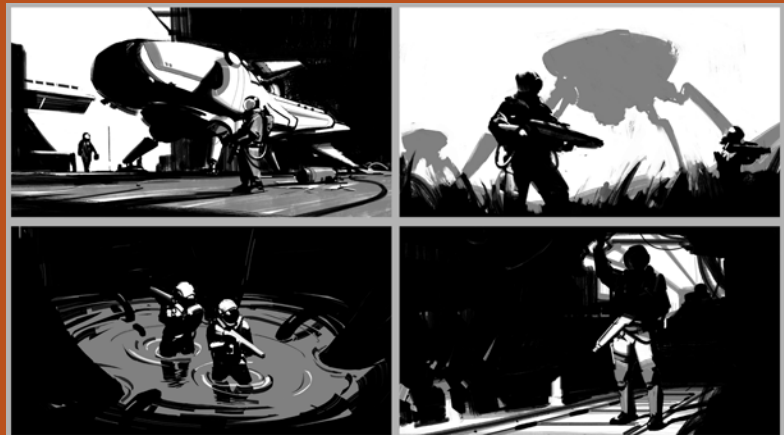
## ⚡ PRO TIP

### Simplification

Simplifying the value groups in the highest contrast helps to create a legible composition.

Whenever I work on something, I use two values of black and white to sketch them out first. This helps me to find a clear lighting, focal point, and composition.

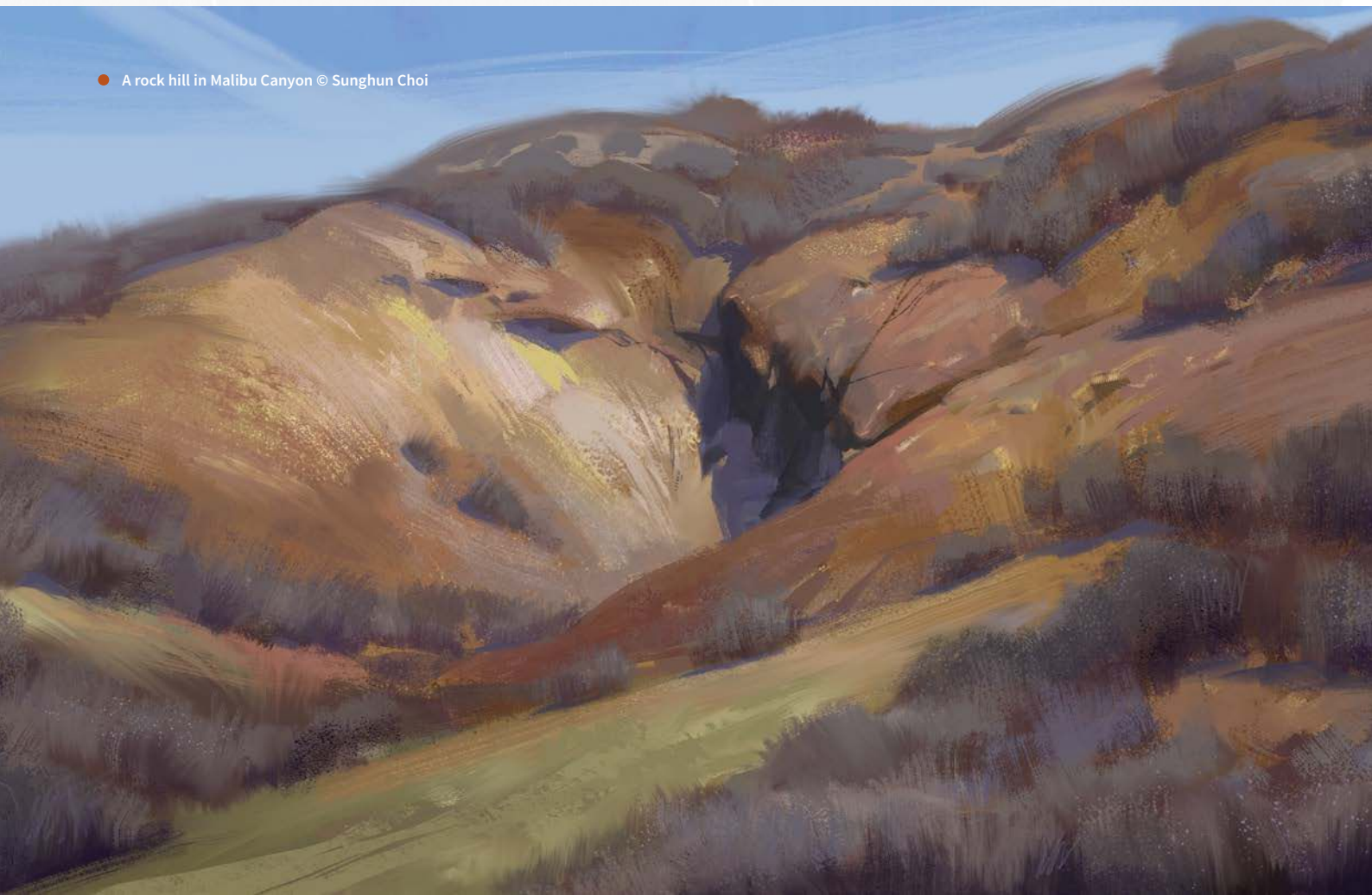
Value and contrast are very important in terms of creating a legible image. If the values are working, it will be read no matter what color is put in. Simplicity is compelling and powerful in many ways. To create it, it's great to use the highest contrast and minimize the use of values.



My use of color has also seemed to improve from studying nature – I've learned more and more about temperature and chroma points. Studying *Alla Prima* by Richard Schmid also helped me to understand

exactly how to imply emotion through my edge control. Nature is very well designed. My goal is to design something even better than nature has achieved – not easy! ▶

● A rock hill in Malibu Canyon © Sunghun Choi



● The alien base on a destroyed city in *New Earth* © Sunghun Choi









● The swamp of Isla Solna island © Sunghun Choi

**2da:** Do you have any favorite places, like parks, forests or beaches to gather inspiration from for your pieces of art?

**SC:** When I was doing lots of outdoor paintings, I didn't go too far. I preferred to go to near places where I could minimize the time of commuting. So, most of the places I went were in Los Angeles,

such as Kenneth Hanns Park, Malibu Canyon, Eaton Canyon, LAX Airport, parking garages; sometimes even my dining table over my monitor.

There are numerous places that I want to visit in the future such as Angels Landing in Utah, Alaska, the Yosemite National Park and Hawai'i Volcano Park. Perhaps I should take an extra long break in

order to visit all of them. But as far as learning and practicing, you don't always have to go to some well-known places. You can start painting things that are surrounding you.

**2da:** Aside from the environment, where else do you look for inspiration? Are there any other artists you particularly admire?





**SC:** The way I get my inspiration is a bit abstract. Sometimes they can come from a cool motion from a film, an advertisement, or music. Recently, I've been listening to lots of soundtracks from films. They help me to get into the mood that I want to create in my artwork. I wish I knew how to get inspired when I needed to be, but it all comes eventually through my research, or simply daily life. For visual inspirations,

there are some great painters. The artists I like to check often are Calvin Liang, Mark Tennant, Isaak Levitan, Roger Dean, John Harris and John Berkey. For concept art, there is a list of my favorite artists like Syd Mead, Jamie Jones, Dorje Bellbrook, Jama Jurabaev, Robh Ruppel, Ian McCaig, and so on. Searching through lots of abstract graphic designs also sparks my imagination.

**2da:** What do you find most challenging about working as a concept artist?

**PC:** One of the most challenging parts as a concept artist is to push the ideas. For example, designing a scene or an object that's more unique and attractive is really challenging. More so, since there are so many great designs and storytellers that already exist, it's ►



● A griffin lair in the mountains © Sunghun Choi



Sunghun Choi









● Sunset Plein Air in Kenneth Hann's Park © Sunghun Choi



● The crash site of ARK © Sunghun Choi

really hard to create something striking and new. Many times, I have to push my idea way further than my first instinct.

Another challenging part would be communication. It's also my job to keep my team inspired on visuals and to create images to meet at a point where everybody is satisfied. I believe good concept art inspires the whole team and makes their job much easier and exciting. To do so is very challenging.

**“I believe good concept art inspires the whole team and makes their job much easier and exciting”**

**2da:** Do you have any tricks or tips to keep yourself motivated on a difficult project?

**SC:** I think it's a matter of what makes the project difficult. In my case, a difficult project was always

something that I wasn't interested in. Of course, I can't always draw whatever I want as a concept artist. The things that helped me the most in different projects were inspirational references.

For example, if I have to design a cell animation style machine gun, I would spend as much time as I can finding my favorite artworks in that style, because they will make me try new things. It's better to find a way to be attracted by a difficult project rather



● A face off between an ancient guardian and an explorer © Sunghun Choi

than producing less attractive works. In my case, searching for inspirations from different genres helps.

**2da:** What makes a project fun for you?

**SC:** An early stage of a project where nothing is established yet gives me a great opportunity to explore and push the idea. It also helps if the genre is what I'm mostly attracted to during that time; for example, sci-fi or fantasy, or post-apocalyptic.

I prefer working with people who are from different disciplines such as programming, world art, and level design. Learning from their point of view is very inspiring and broadens my view on the project. Working with some great concept artists is also fun to push the ideas further.

**2da:** Can you tell us anything about the projects you are working on at the moment?

**SC:** I am currently working on *Destiny*, which is a co-operative first person shooting game. *Destiny* has a variety of aesthetics that are intriguing to people. The visual realm sometimes goes beyond sci-fi and fantasy which makes it super fun to work on.

Our team works collaboratively to bring some amazingly creative solutions that will give players

new experiences in our game. Plus, it has always been exciting to work with the rest of Bungie's super talented concept artists like Dorje Bellbrook and Jesse van Dijk, Joe Cross, Adrian Majkrzak, Ryan DeMita, and Patrick Bloom. Their brilliant ideas and artwork have been inspiring me to keep pushing my creative boundaries.

**2da:** Is there a particularly memorable project you have worked on, or an artwork that was a real turning point for you creatively? Can you tell us a bit about why it was significant for you?

**SC:** I used to be scared of making a busy piece that had too many things going on, because I preferred simplicity in a way that shows what's the most important part of the piece.

*Parade* was one of the hardest tasks for me because, as the title suggests, it needed many people and fliers, dancers, and so on, to show the celebratory mood in a town. I had to think a lot before I started some sketches for it. I did sketches over and over to quickly come up with a solution to keep both simplicity and complexity.

This is when I found 'value grouping.' Having a group of objects in a larger group of certain value range helped me to organize them easily. Then I designed

the shapes of value groups, and stylized my dragon's silhouette which is supposed to be standing out the most. Since then, grouping values has been helping me the most whenever I had to work on the more complex environments.

**2da:** When you're not working hard on your art, what do you like to do with your time?

**SC:** I always get scared of getting this question because there are not many things I do normally. I like to watch movies and game cinematics; meeting people. Usually when I'm not working on my art, it means I'm probably tired or drained of my creative juices. When this happens I try to do something that would get me inspired again.

I like to keep a group of friends around who keep me inspired and motivated. Talking and sharing my thoughts with them on art and other things in life allows me to not just work hard on my art, but also focus on other important things in life.

**2da:** Do you have any plans for future projects? Is there anything exciting for us to look out for?

**SC:** I like to have a consistent storyline for my personal projects, and I am currently building one. It's going to be a series of illustrations but I ▶





● Marsh growl in an ancient forest © Sunghun Choi

haven't decided the theme or genre yet. I have been gathering some new inspirations such as master paintings and some comic books.

It's not easy to find something that intrigues me the first time and then stays intriguing long enough.

Once everything is briefly established, I will start off with some black-and-white sketches. Indians, dragons, a Necromancer – whatever excites me!

**2da:** And finally, do you have any advice for readers on how to succeed as a concept artist?

**SC:** Everybody knows that hard work is the way to getting better, but it has never been easy. I think it's very important to find what makes you work hard, which for me is 'excitement.' Strong inspirations and masterpieces always excite me to work on something related to them.





Once I'm really excited I draw or explore, that leads me to work on and on. It is also important to find out what you love to work on the most, as specifically as possible. It becomes much easier when you know what you want to do for a lifetime. In my case, I love painting landscapes which led me to specialize in

environment design. I also liked designing alien worlds with high-tech human architectures, and that led me to build a portfolio with consistency in genre.

It becomes much clearer when you find your speciality because that helps you to narrow down

to some specific career paths. Most of all, we have to be excited about something we want to create next. Without being inspired or excited, it won't help us in any way, though we try hard.

***Thank you Sung for chatting to 2dartist! ●***



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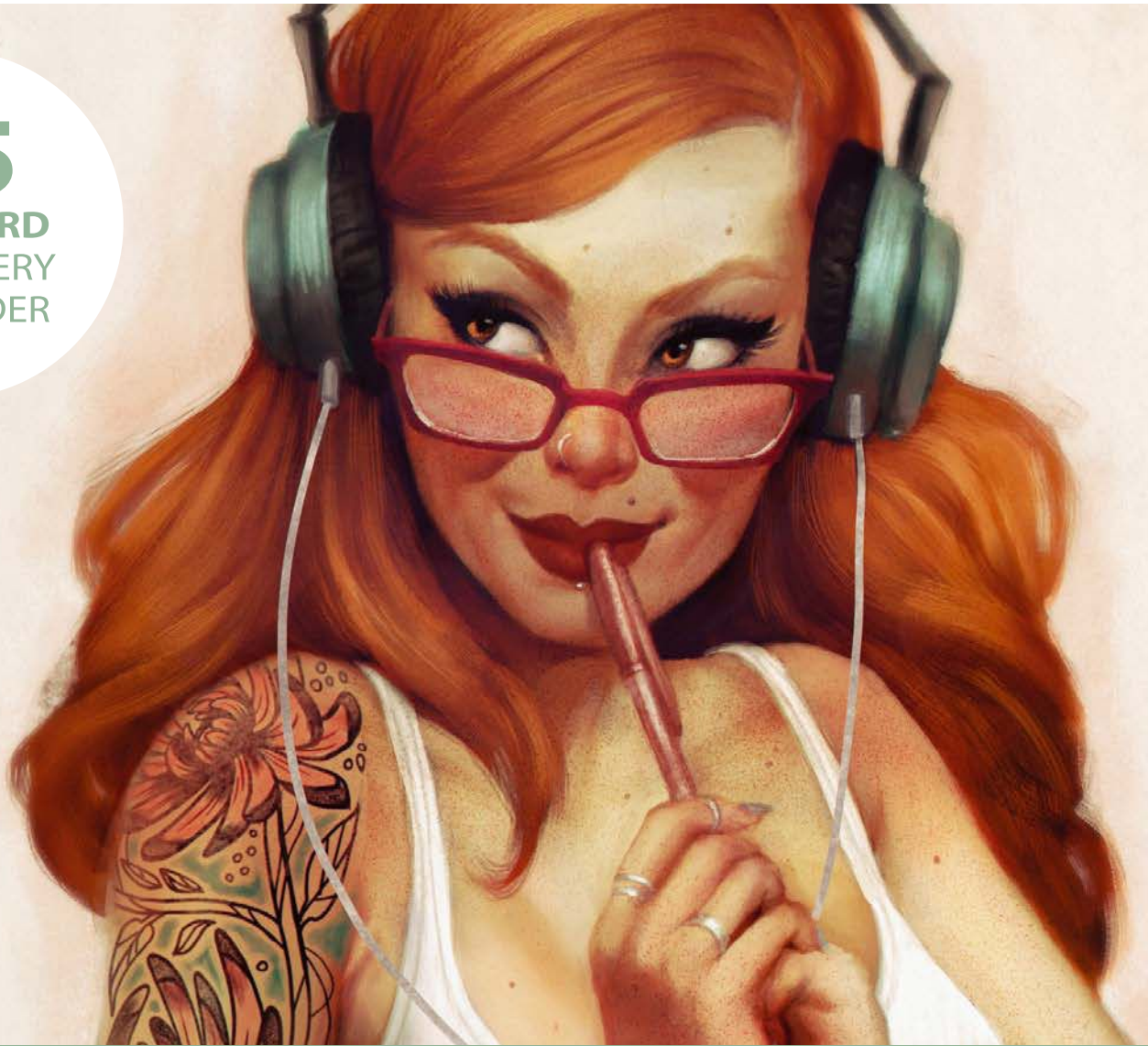
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# Discover luminescent paintings

Florian Aupetit discusses his artwork, his progression in the digital art industry and his upcoming animation ▶





## The Artist



**Florian Aupetit**

[florianaupetit.tumblr.com](http://florianaupetit.tumblr.com)

**Interviewed by:**  
Annie Moss

Florian Aupetit is a French 25 year old art director and 3D generalist at the Parisian studio Monsieur K. He also works as a freelance illustrator and concept artist.

Aupetit



There are some artists who seem to have a natural instinct for creating exquisite artwork, and the up-and-coming Paris-based artist Florian Aupetit is certainly one of them. Although he is still only in the early stages of his career, Florian has produced over the last five years a wealth of stunningly evocative images.

His digital work includes emotive environments, endearing monsters and inventive concepts. However, he is skilled in multiple disciplines including 3D and 2D digital art, speed painting, photography and he is now also learning traditional painting methods. Added to this Florian is currently working on a personal project, an animation titled *Father and Son* featuring his popular characters in orange suits.

His work has a luminous quality, coupling light and bright colors with shadowed environments creating an atmospheric tone reminiscent of morning haze or the glow of sunset. This month Florian talks to 2dartist about how he became a digital artist, the narratives behind his work and experimenting with effects.

**2dartist:** Hello Florian, thank you for talking to 2dartist! Can you begin by telling us a little about yourself and your career?

**Florian Aupetit:** Hi! First of all thank you very much for your invitation, I'm glad to be here to answer your

questions. Well, I'm a young French artist currently working as an art director and 3D generalist in a Parisian studio called Monsieur K. I'm also working as a freelancer. I'm a 3D artist before a painter but the first software I learned was Photoshop (version 7.0 if I remember) with my father at the end of elementary school. Then during high school I discovered 3ds Max software, but I really started to paint in 2014.

**2da:** As an artist and illustrator relatively new to the industry, how have you managed to establish yourself so quickly?

**FA:** A lot of people ask me how I established myself in the industry, but because I was a 3D artist before I became a '2D artist' I never thought about it. Until last year painting was just a kind of hobby – it was a way to relax myself after work. But after a few months a lot of people around me told me there was something interesting in my work, and I should work more on my painting to develop it.

So I worked really hard during my free time on personal pieces to fill my portfolio. And since that moment studios started to call me for freelance work for illustrations or concept art.

**2da:** Do you have any advice for readers who are just starting out as freelance artists?

**FA:** I'm also starting out as a freelancer so I don't have any technical advice for you except work really

hard with passion, and success will come. Don't try to copy other trending artists but make things for yourself and your work will pop out from the usual work we see everywhere on the internet.

Another thing that students or new freelancers forget is to sell their work and skills. You can be the greatest artist in the world, but if you can't sell your ideas or paintings properly no-one will give you opportunities to get a job.

**2da:** Where do you look for inspiration? Are there any artists that you try to reference in your work?

**FA:** I try to get interested in as many things as possible no matter the subject (animals, mechanics, haute couture, engineering, architecture and so on). But I particularly like painting and photography, so I spend at least one hour per day, looking for new pictures on the internet or in books.

I have a blog where I reference the paintings that stand out ([www.master-painters.tumblr.com](http://www.master-painters.tumblr.com)) but I also try to visit as many museums and exhibitions as possible – living in Paris I am pretty lucky about that.

I don't try to copy all these artists, I think it would be wrong, but I analyze how they worked or their approach. The painters who marked me the most are John Singer Sargent, Anders Zorn and John Atkinson Grimshaw for their use of colors and values. And if I had to pick three photographers it would be





● Concept art for Florian's short film; it represents the awakening of the son



Brassaï for his use of lighting, Eugène Atget for the loneliness we can see through his photographs and Edward Steichen.

**2da:** Your work has a very distinctive style, how have you developed this over time?

**FA:** I don't particularly work on my 'style' I just try to transcribe my vision of reality through the painting. For example I almost never use blur in my paintings to recreate the depth of field because the blur is for me a consequence of the use of a camera. So I prefer using the degradation of the details, the parts of my

paintings which are out of focus will have almost no details and vice versa. So because of that, and if it's in line with the other rules, I can have 'bad' brushstrokes in these parts of the picture. But in general I think you don't have to find a style or copy a style, it will come naturally. ►









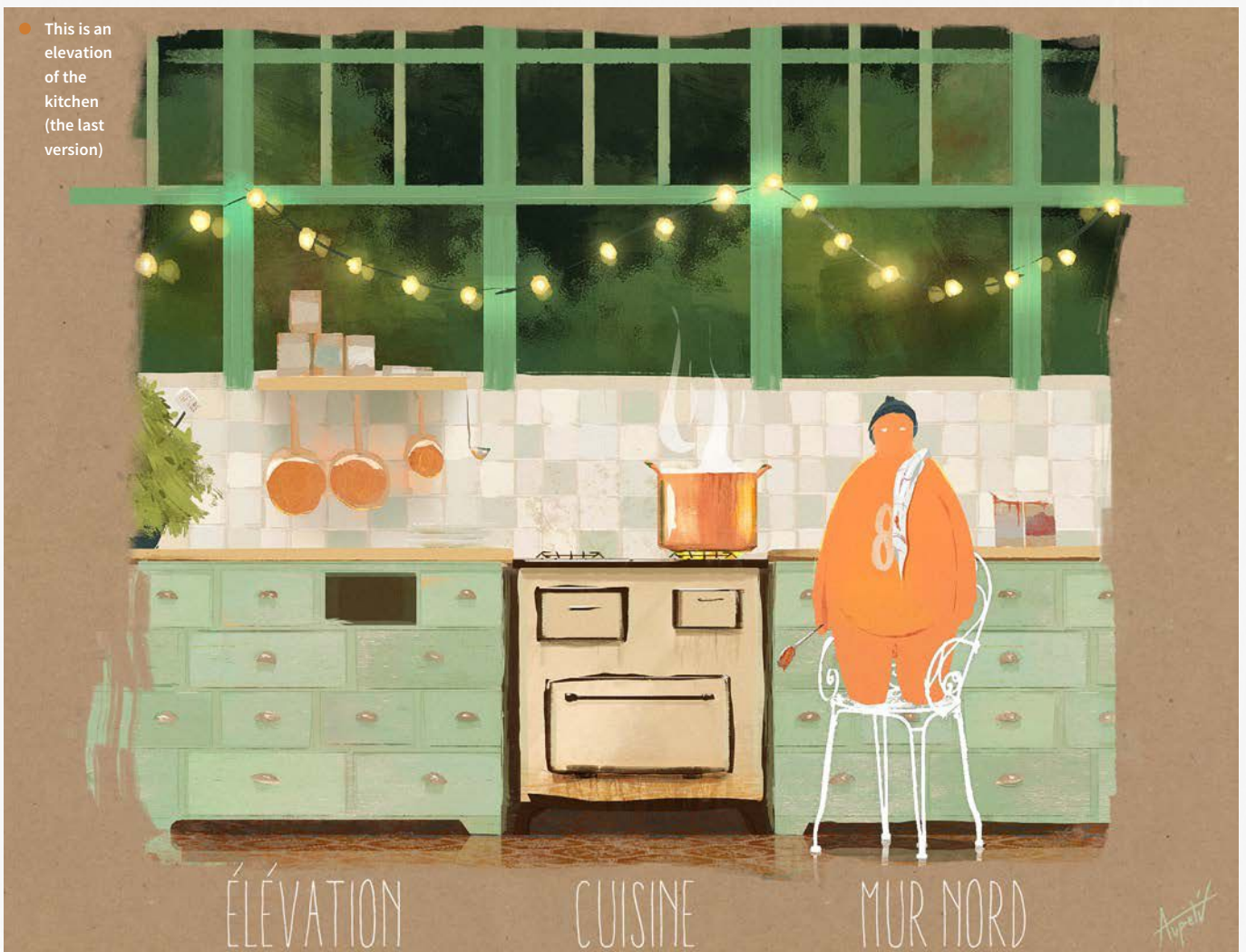




- Another concept artwork for Florian's short film, it was the first version of the kitchen



- This is an elevation of the kitchen (the last version)





**2da:** Can you tell us a bit about the creation of your characters in numbered orange suits? Is there any significance to the numbers you use?

**FA:** It's an important project for me because thanks to those two little orange guys I'm able to earn a living with my paintings. It started two years ago when I wanted to try watercolor, so I painted a couple of characters and landscapes. This type of painting was too hard for me so I put the paintings at the back of a drawer until last year. I found one of the watercolors and I decided to paint it with Photoshop. I found that so much fun that I decided to paint and create them a story (and it gives me another reason to work on my skills).

But after many paintings I thought the best way to tell their story was through animation, so for the last couple of months I have been working on an animation short film. The script is done and I'm currently working on the pre-production. Unfortunately, I can only work on it during the limited free time I have, so my progression is very slow.

And if you want to know the meaning of the numbers it's really simple, it represents how old they are.

**2da:** You have created some amazing speed paintings, how does this work differ from work which has a longer process? Do you find it a more liberating way to work?

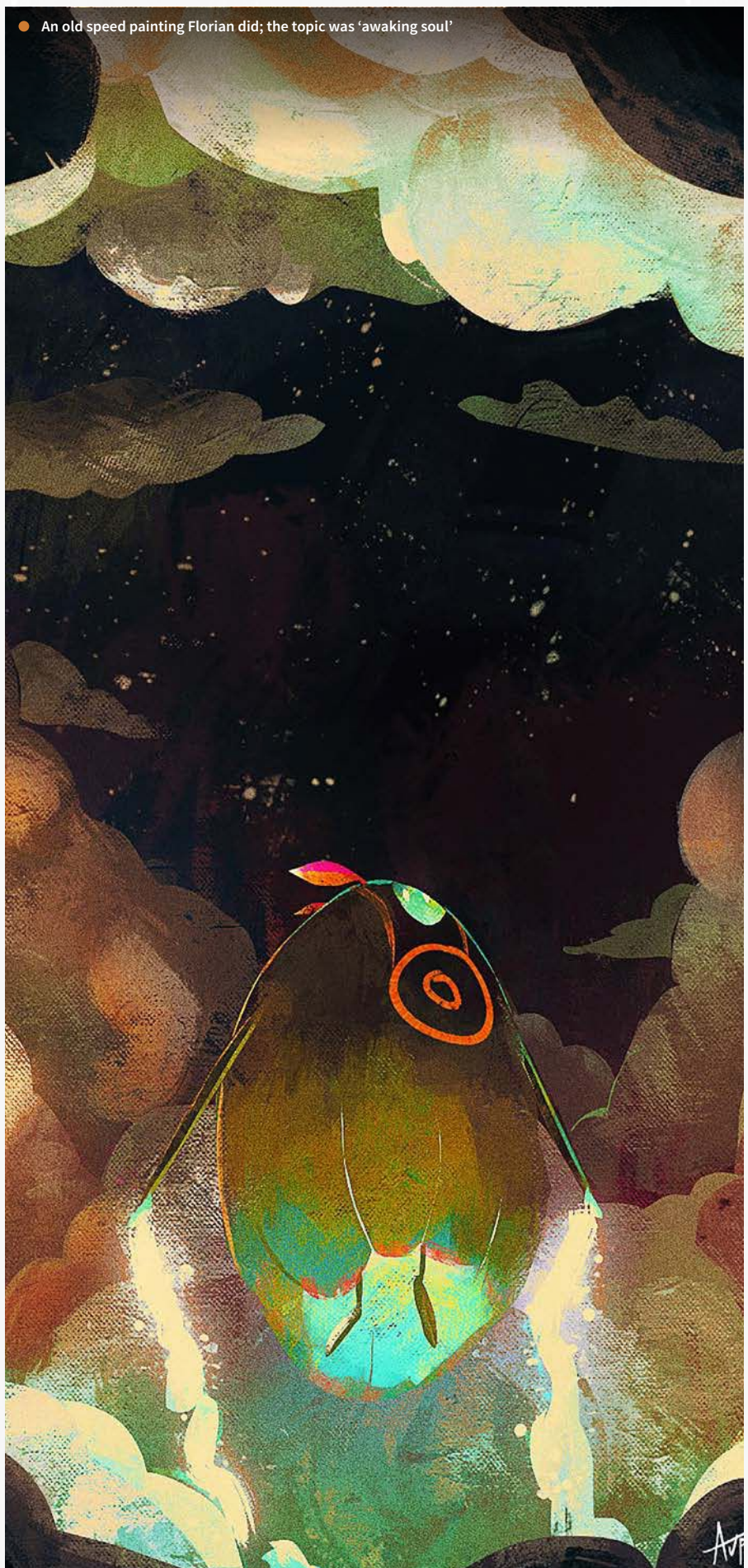
**FA:** I think speed painting is a great tool to increase your productivity and your ability to share a story because you have to tell more with less, and you have to do this quickly.

It's also a nice way to work on the moods of my paintings with the lighting and colors I will choose. But even with my other paintings I usually don't work for more than half a day, so it's not a big difference compared to people who work several days or weeks on their paintings.

**2da:** How did you go about creating the characters for your series of beasts and little monsters?

**FA:** I really like experimenting with Photoshop, trying to find new effects or combining multiple filters and these little monsters are, in a way, the final result of these experimentations. I used to record the process so you can see the video on my YouTube channel, but it's essentially mixing pictures or old paintings with many blending modes, adding adjustment layers, and distorting them.

The design of these little creatures are almost random, I play with shapes and colors so the process is different for each character; that's why they are all so different. ►

















● *Water lily diver.* Florian has great admiration for old deep sea divers so paint this in honor







**“There is a calm and quiet atmosphere in old photographs. I try to recreate this feeling in my paintings”**

**2da:** You have also produced some photography work. How has photography influenced your artwork and illustration?

**FA:** Yes absolutely. I love photographs and especially the old ones; many years ago photographers took time to really work on their compositions and lighting, like painters in a way.

There is a calm and quiet atmosphere in old photographs. I try to recreate this feeling in my paintings. As for my old master painter's collection,

I used to take a little part of each day to look at new photographs and store in my mind the lighting, the composition or the render. It's my second passion so I use my cameras (digital and analogue) almost all the time, and especially when I'm traveling.

**2da:** What do you like to do when you aren't working hard creating your beautiful art and illustrations?





**FA:** I'm always working hard haha! But when I'm not I learn traditional painting (I started recently with gouache). Watching and studying both good and bad movies is another little pleasure I can have during my free time. I also take a lot of pictures with my cameras and when I can, I try to travel to discover new countries and people. And as I said before I'm working on my short film but no matter what I'm

doing it's always something in relation to my passion for pictures.

**2da:** Lastly, what can we expect from you in the not-too-distant future?

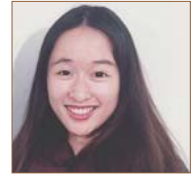
**FA:** I hope that next year you will see my animation short film with my two little guys – it's called *Father &*

*Son*, and it will be a mix of both 3D and 2D animation. I wrote the story with one of my friends, and we really took the time to work hard on it, so I think you will like it. I'm also working with Sense Collective, so I will have many illustrations to do with their team available for viewing. To illustrate a children's book is one of my goals, so if you need someone for that just call me! ●









**Leilei Huang**  
leileihuang.com

**Software Used:**  
Photoshop, PaintTool SAI

Leilei Huang is an award-winning illustrator and graphic designer based in Edinburgh, UK. She recently graduated with a Master's degree, and would eventually like to create her own books.

A R T I S T   S P O T L I G H T

# Immersive illustration

Taking inspiration from literature, Leilei Huang's pencil sketches quickly develop into absorbing digital illustrations. She talks to 2dartist about her deeply contemplative work ▶



Having recently completed a Master's degree at the University of Edinburgh, Leilei Huang is poised to launch an exciting career in illustration. Mixing a background in traditional Chinese ink painting with a passion for visual storytelling and digital techniques, Leilei creates thoroughly compelling images.

Originally from southern China, Leilei now lives in the UK where her work has been shortlisted for the Penguin Random House Design Award for her cover design of Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges are not the only fruit*.

In addition to this accolade, Leilei has been a selected artist for the Macmillan Prize, shortlisted for the World Illustration Awards 2015, and this year she has been selected to take part in the annual Bologna Illustrators exhibition in Italy.

Her work simultaneously achieves a simple yet detailed look, often depicting sparse open landscapes and isolated characters. Her beautifully evocative scenes are indicative ►



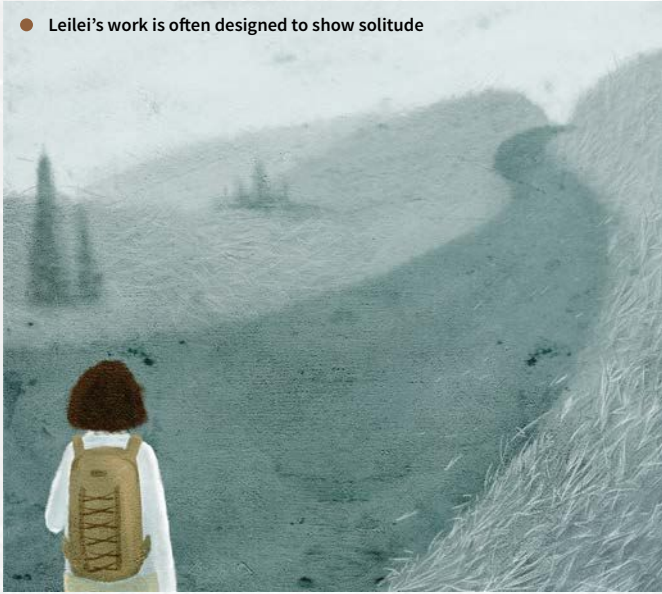
● An image from the *Deep in the Clouds* series



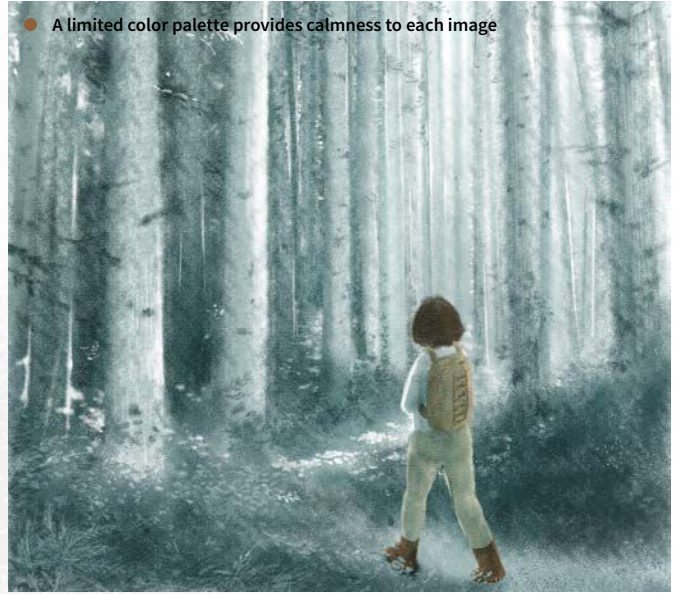
● This series incorporates Leilei's love of hiking



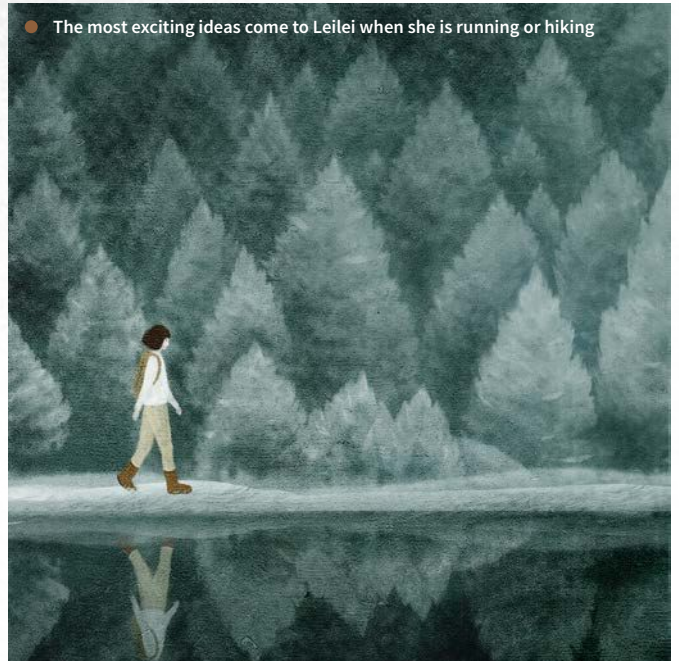
● Leilei's work is often designed to show solitude



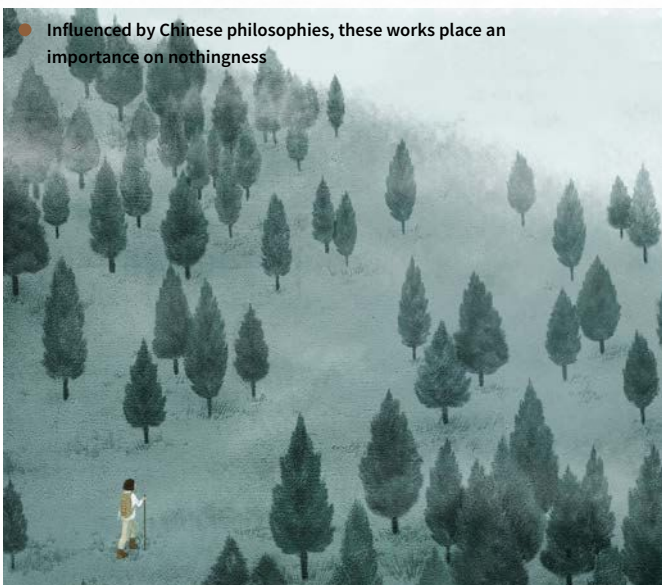
● A limited color palette provides calmness to each image



● Leilei wants to present in her work different aspects of being alone



● The most exciting ideas come to Leilei when she is running or hiking



● Influenced by Chinese philosophies, these works place an importance on nothingness



● The insignificance of humans is a recurring theme in Leilei's work



of her desire to present the insignificance of individual people in such a vast world.

Here, Leilei talks to 2dartist magazine about her work and her plans for the future...

**2dartist:** Hello Leilei! Thanks for talking to 2dartist. First off, could you introduce yourself with a bit about your background and projects?

**Leilei Huang:** I was born in southern China, and I learned traditional Chinese ink painting at an early age. Later I trained as a science student, enrolling in a geochemistry program in university. Having tried several different paths, I was more and more aware of my passion for visual art.

I applied for art courses after graduation and came to Edinburgh, UK. My projects are mainly about solitude, loneliness and everything between them.



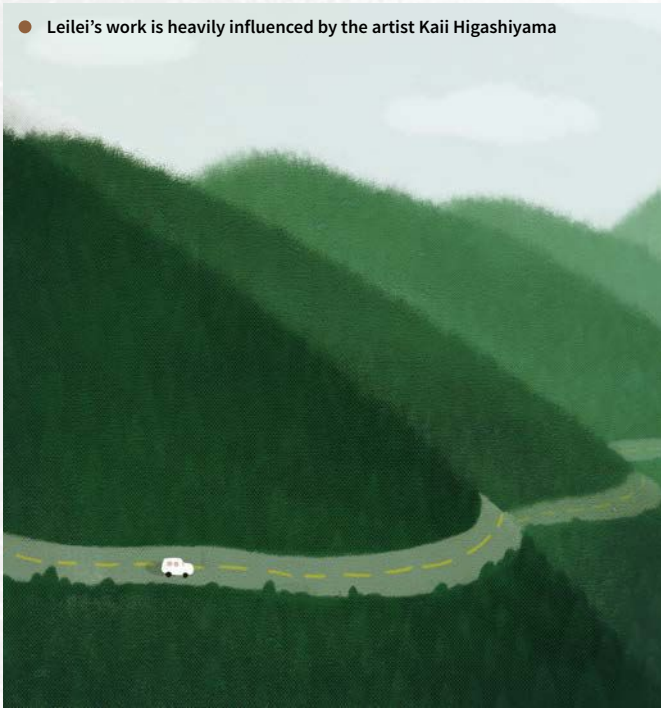
● An image from the *Go the Distance* series



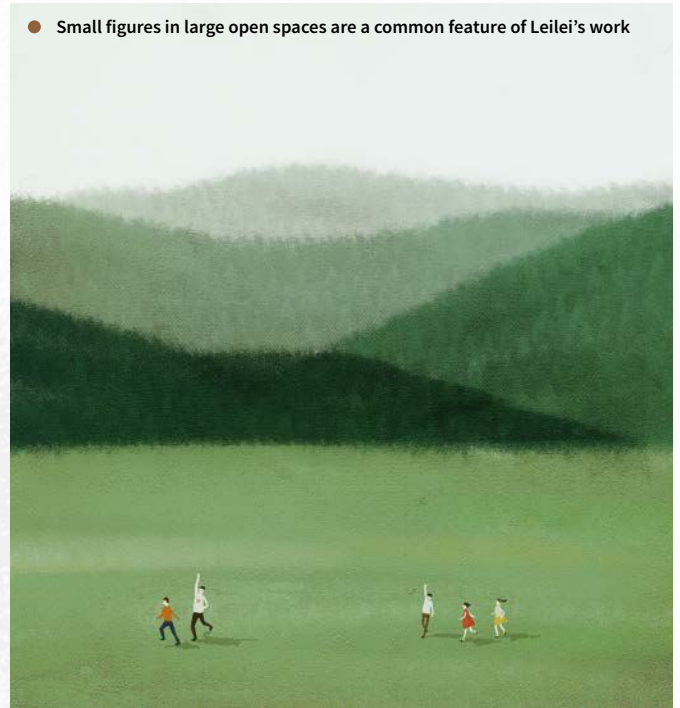
● Leilei hopes her work will help to relieve the anxiety of loneliness



● Leilei's work is heavily influenced by the artist Kaii Higashiyama



● Small figures in large open spaces are a common feature of Leilei's work



**2da:** What first attracted you to illustration? And what encouraged you to take it up as a career?

**LH:** I was fascinated by the narrative of illustration. Besides drawing I like writing, and I found that they were a perfect match to express my ideas. I had been sharing my works on my website for many years, and eventually a magazine editor noticed me three years ago. I have started to gain clients since then.

**2da:** What are your preferred tools to work with and why?

**LH:** I use a sketchbook, pencil and mobile phone to jot down any ideas that come to mind. Then I work digitally with PaintTool SAI and Photoshop. SAI is a small piece of software that does not slow down or overheat your computer; it has a magical anti-shake function that gives you smooth lines.

**2da:** Your work tends to have a very calm stillness to it. How do you go about achieving this effect?

**LH:** I am happy that you feel this way, since calmness is one of my goals. I want to represent in my work different aspects of being alone, hoping to relieve the anxiety of loneliness, a worldwide epidemic nowadays.

As regards creating the effect in the image itself, I guess the calmness comes from the soft color palette and distant view point. Everything becomes quieter and slower when seen from afar.

**2da:** Where do you turn to for inspiration? Are there any artists you like to reference?



● The anti-shake function of PaintTool SAI helps Leilei to create smooth lines

**LH:** My inspirations are mostly from literature, I am a huge fan of books. My favorite writer is Haruki Murakami, because I identify with Murakami's heroes and heroines; those silent urban dwellers.

As for artists, I like David Hopper and Kaii Higashiyama, both of them create tranquil work.

**2da:** You often use a subtle range of colors in each illustration. How do you go about selecting a color palette for a new work?

**LH:** Basically I follow my instinct; I like soft, calming colors. Actually there are barely any bright colors in my daily objects; I find that they are an irritant for me. ►





● An image from Leilei's latest series, *Kafka on the Shore*

**2da:** You leave a large amount of space in your works, often drawing focus to small figures. Why is space so important to your style?

**LH:** I was greatly influenced by oriental philosophies, especially Buddhism and Taoism. Different from the enterprising western culture, they emphasize the importance of nothingness, as well as the insignificance of humanity.

This tendency could also be seen in traditional oriental visual art. For example, traditional Chinese paintings often feature majestic mountains and tiny people.

**2da:** What do you like to do when you are not creating beautiful illustrations?

**LH:** A lot of reading, running and hiking! Reading is my biggest inspiration, I enjoy the undisturbed time with my books. Running and hiking give me a break from the sedentary illustrator mode. More importantly, some of the most exciting ideas come to me when I empty my brain while out and about running.

**2da:** And finally, what are your plans for the future? What do you aspire to do over the next few years?

**LH:** I will be working as a graphic designer, and keep on creating illustrations at the same time. I hope that one day I can make a living as a freelance illustrator and publish my own books! ●

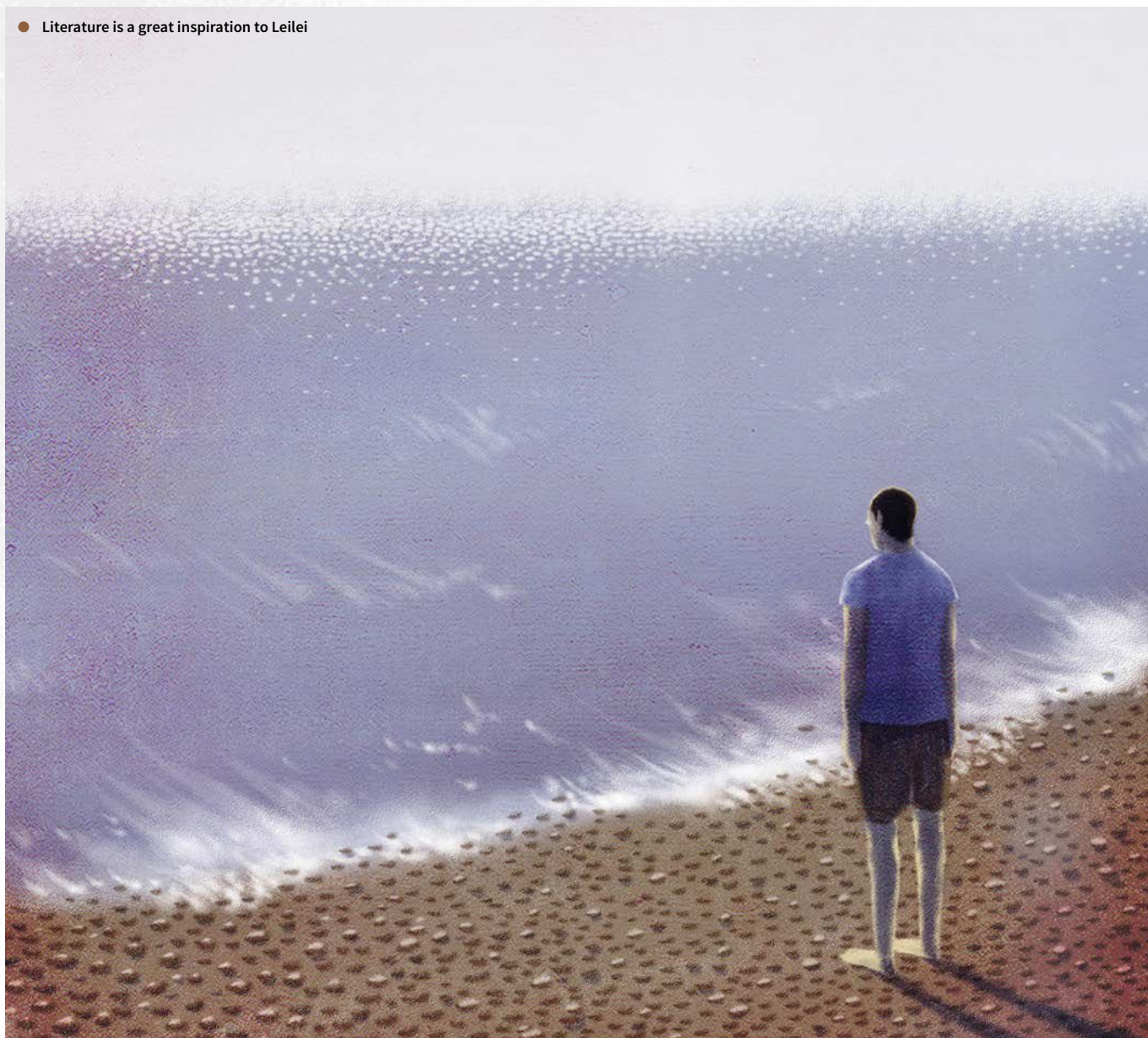
## The Artist



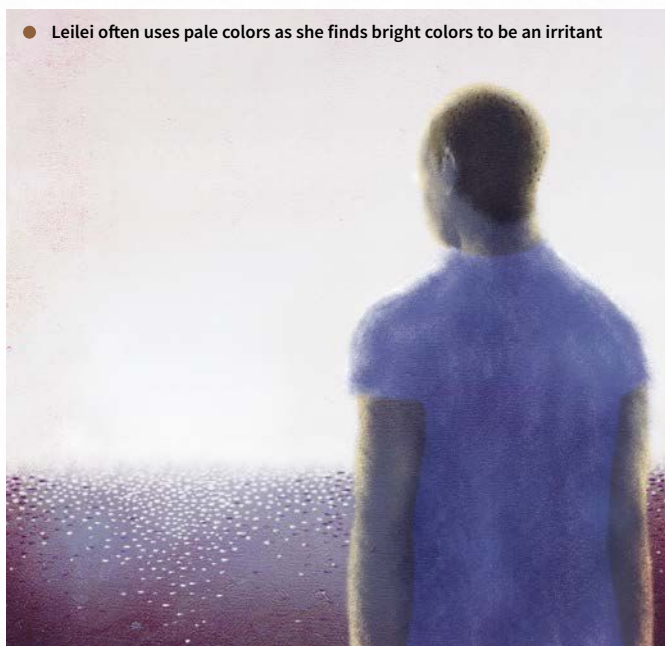
**Leilei Huang**  
leileihuang.com



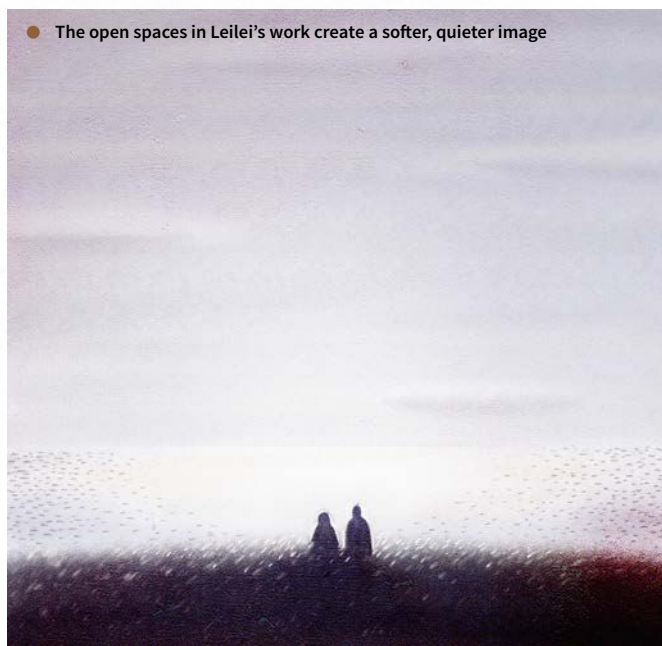
- Literature is a great inspiration to Leilei



- Leilei often uses pale colors as she finds bright colors to be an irritant



- The open spaces in Leilei's work create a softer, quieter image







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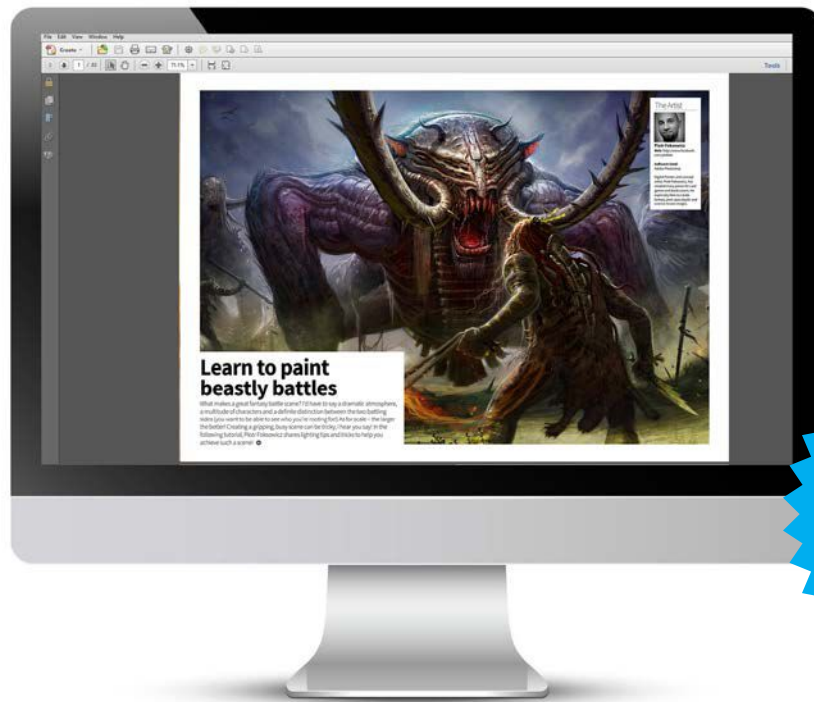


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ZAC RETZ

Sketchbook

Capturing specific moments in a story, Zac Retz considers sketches to be the most important part of creating a new artwork. Here he shows 2dartist his work.

## The Artist



**Zac Retz**  
zacretz.com

Zac Retz was born in 1991 in upstate New York. He received his BFA in illustration in 2012, and he is now an artist working in the videogame and animation industry.



## See the sketches behind Zac Retz' animations...

The sketch stage of any art piece is the most important. It is where you come up with ideas and explore the visuals in your work. I sketch outside and in coffee shops to learn about real color and lighting situations. I find it necessary to sketch outside and learn from the world we live in. Your imagination is built off of what you already know and have seen, so the more you see and observe the better your ideas will be. By painting outside you are observing how light and color works in nature. You're expanding your knowledge so you can go home and apply these principles to your more imaginative work.

I also sketch to develop ideas and to explore lighting, composition, and poses for a final painting, and develop ideas for a story. These exploratory sketches help me to see the different possibilities of a specific story moment. As I'm sketching, I imagine I'm watching a movie. I close my eyes and imagine what that scene would look like, and then I sketch it very quickly and loosely, trying to capture the image in my head. Most of my paintings are done very quickly. This allows me to capture a moment in the story and then move on and sketch out another idea.

### Inspiration and ideas

I'm inspired by nature and my own life experiences. I like to think about things that I ►

- 01 Character sketches develop the look of a character. It helps to find their personality in the drawing.
- 02 Spend time redrawing different poses with slight variations. If the character is going to be seen a lot this extra work pays off.
- 03 When sketching props, spend a lot of time experimenting with different shapes and color variations.
- 04 These are sketches based on the topic 'villain hideout'. Zac thought about what kind of hideout would a villain make? What kind of materials would he use?



01



02





## ⚡ PRO TIPS

### Sketching characters

Showing the characters' personality through loose sketches help to develop the look of a character. It's also helpful to sketch the same characters using different styles or methods. For example, I sketch the first half focusing on silhouette, then I switch over to sketching in line. You may come up with something new in a different sketching method.

### Values

Start with a two value sketch. This will help you make a strong lighting structure within your painting. You will have a more visually striking image.

### Sketching from life

Sketching lighting and color from life has helped me to improve as an artist. By observing different lighting situations I am able to apply what I learn to my own work, and not rely so heavily on references.



## SKETCHBOOK OF ZAC RETZ

have gone through in my own life, and explore these ideas in a more creative way. For example, I take an idea that is as simple as going on a walk through the woods and I expand on it. What if I had a robot friend who went along with me on my adventures? What if we come across forest creatures and some are evil? That could be the start to a whole new story!

### Materials

All my professional work is done in Photoshop. While sketching on the go, I use just a cheap sketchbook with a ballpoint pen, or pencil, and sometimes Sharpies. I'm not too picky

about the materials I use in my sketchbook; it's not about the finished product, it's just about capturing what I see in front of me quickly. For my observational color studies I paint with acrylic paints on watercolor paper (no specific brand) or with my iPad using the Bamboo Solo Stylus and the Procreate app.

### Sketching techniques

Sketching for me is all about capturing the overall feeling of a scene or exploring a design. My sketches are very quick and messy. I squint a lot as I'm sketching so I don't get caught up in the details. Sometimes I even close my eyes and

doodle. This allows for a more direct translation from my thoughts to my canvas. Overall, being quick and loose is key! ●

- 05 Once the story of a journey is figured out, it's just a matter of imagining the journey and sketching out the correct mood, color, and compositions.
- 06 Quick color key sketches of two kids going on an adventure; Zac's favorite sketch which he will turn into an illustration.



05a

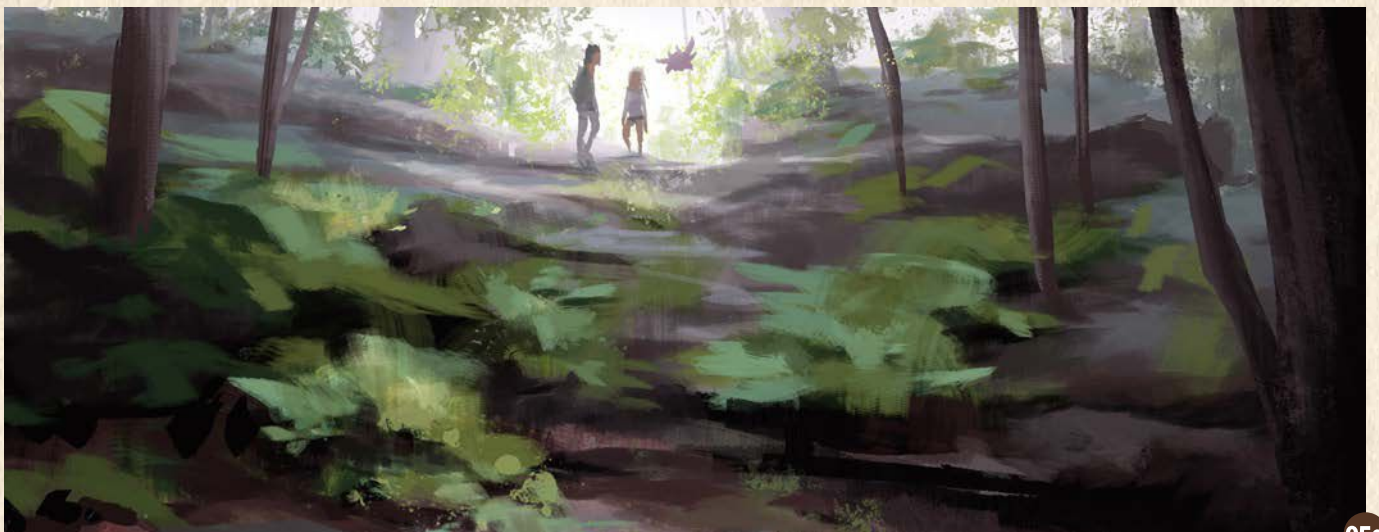


05b





05c



05d



06





07



08



09

**07** Most of the time Zac will start with a two value sketch, so he can create a strong value statement.

**08** From the value sketch, Zac will start to block in the color.

**09** From the color sketch, he continues to polish and turn it into a finished painting of a moment from a story.

**10** Designing a cupcake shop.

**11** Value sketches to figure out the lighting composition.

**12** Adding color to a value sketch.





10



11



12





13



14a

**13** A quick story moment sketch, to depict an emotion of a scene

**14** Acrylic plein air sketches at only three inches wide. The focus is to capture the color and light of the scene



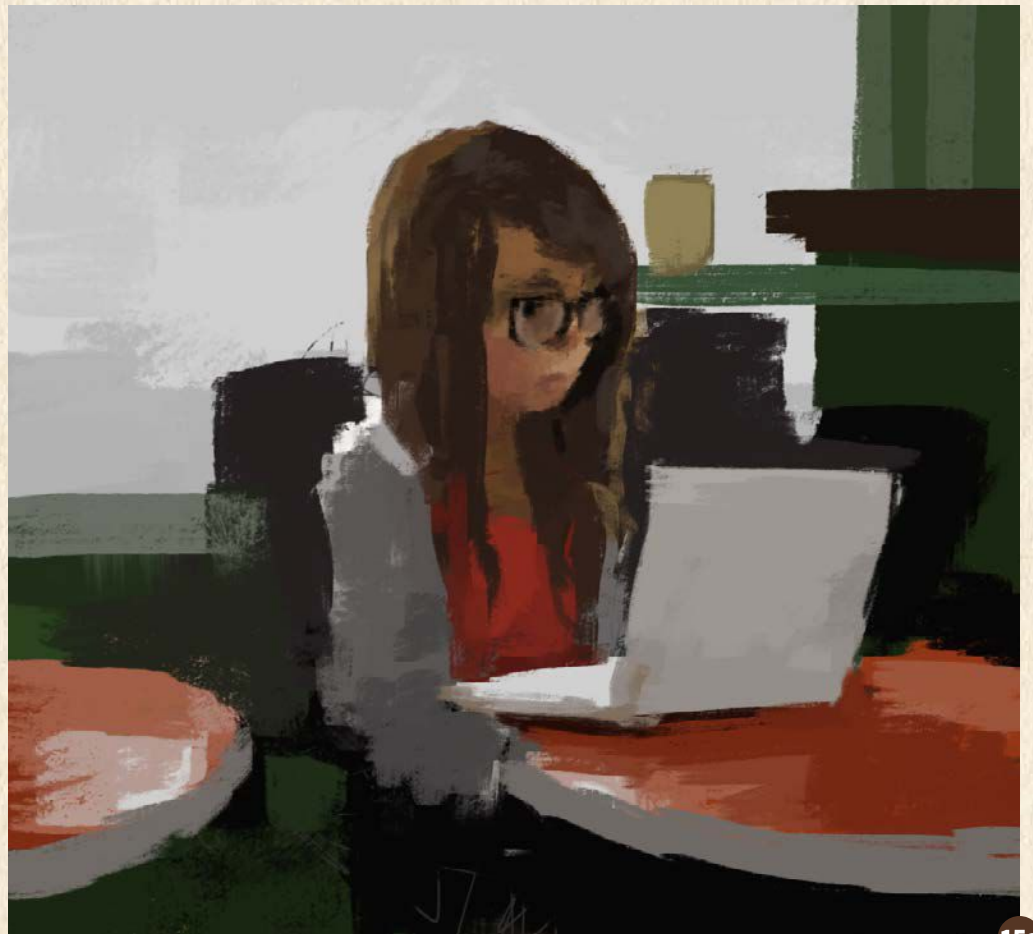


14b

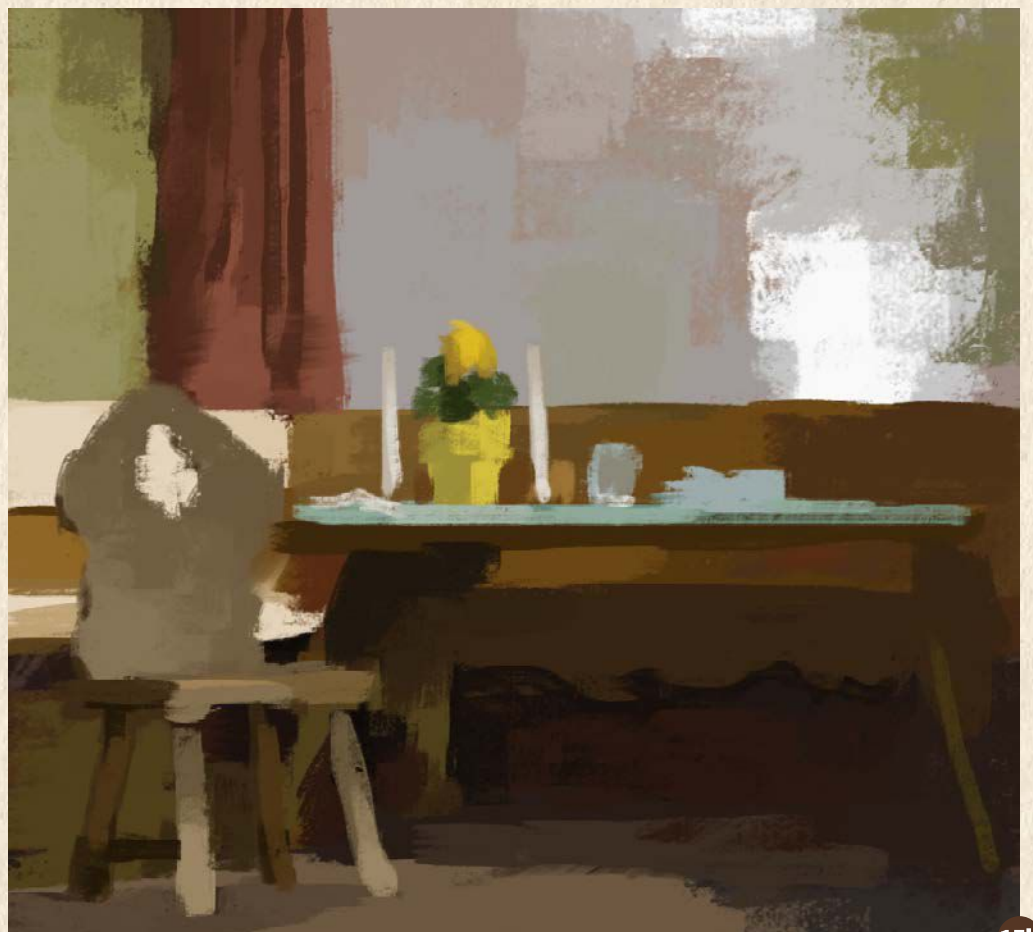


14c





15a

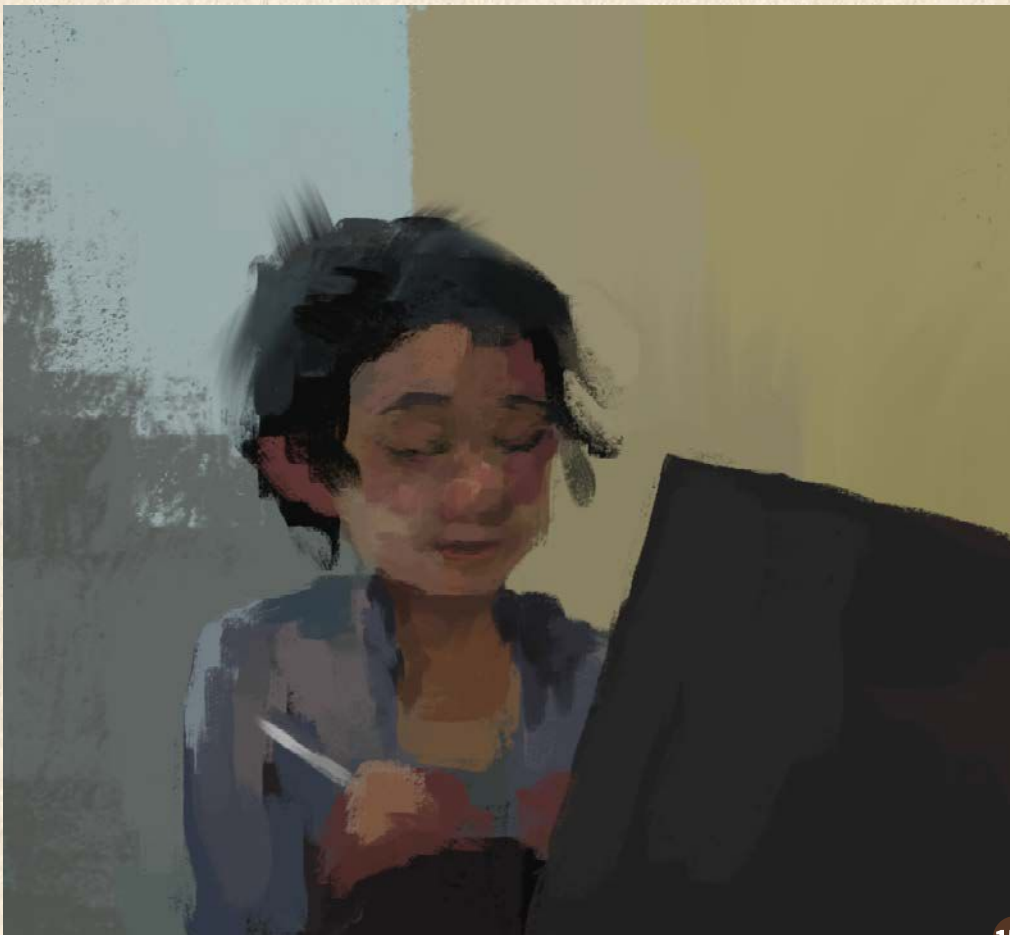


15b





15c



15d

15 iPad color sketches. The focus is to capture the color and light of the scene



# 2dartist

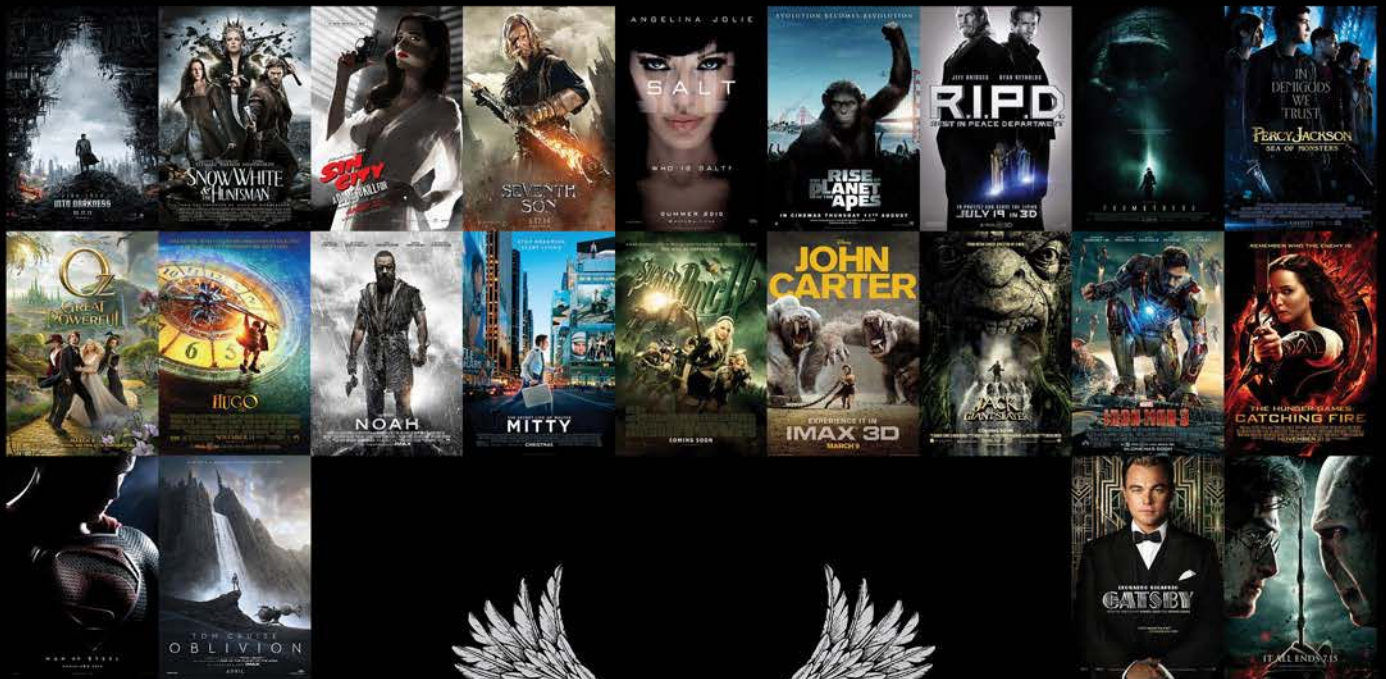
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We look forward to hearing from you!





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## The Artist

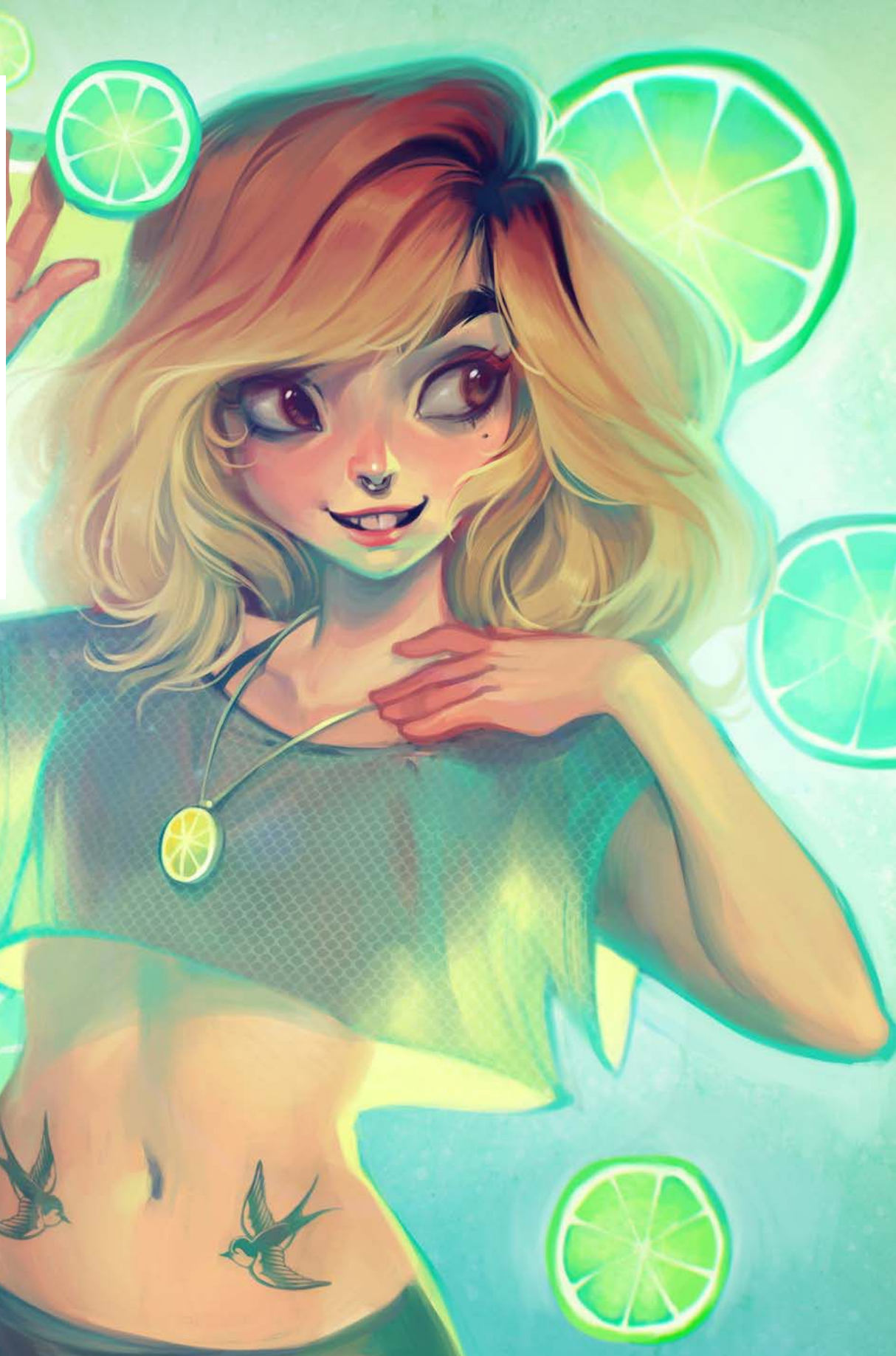


**Lois van Baarle  
(a.k.a. Loish)**

loish.net

**Interviewed by:**  
Annie Moss

Lois van Baarle, known as Loish, is a highly popular freelance illustrator and animator from the Netherlands. Since graduating in 2009, her artworks have gained a dedicated international following.



# The Art of Loish

Discover the work that has won the freelance illustrator and animator Lois van Baarle (a.k.a. Loish) thousands of dedicated fans ▶



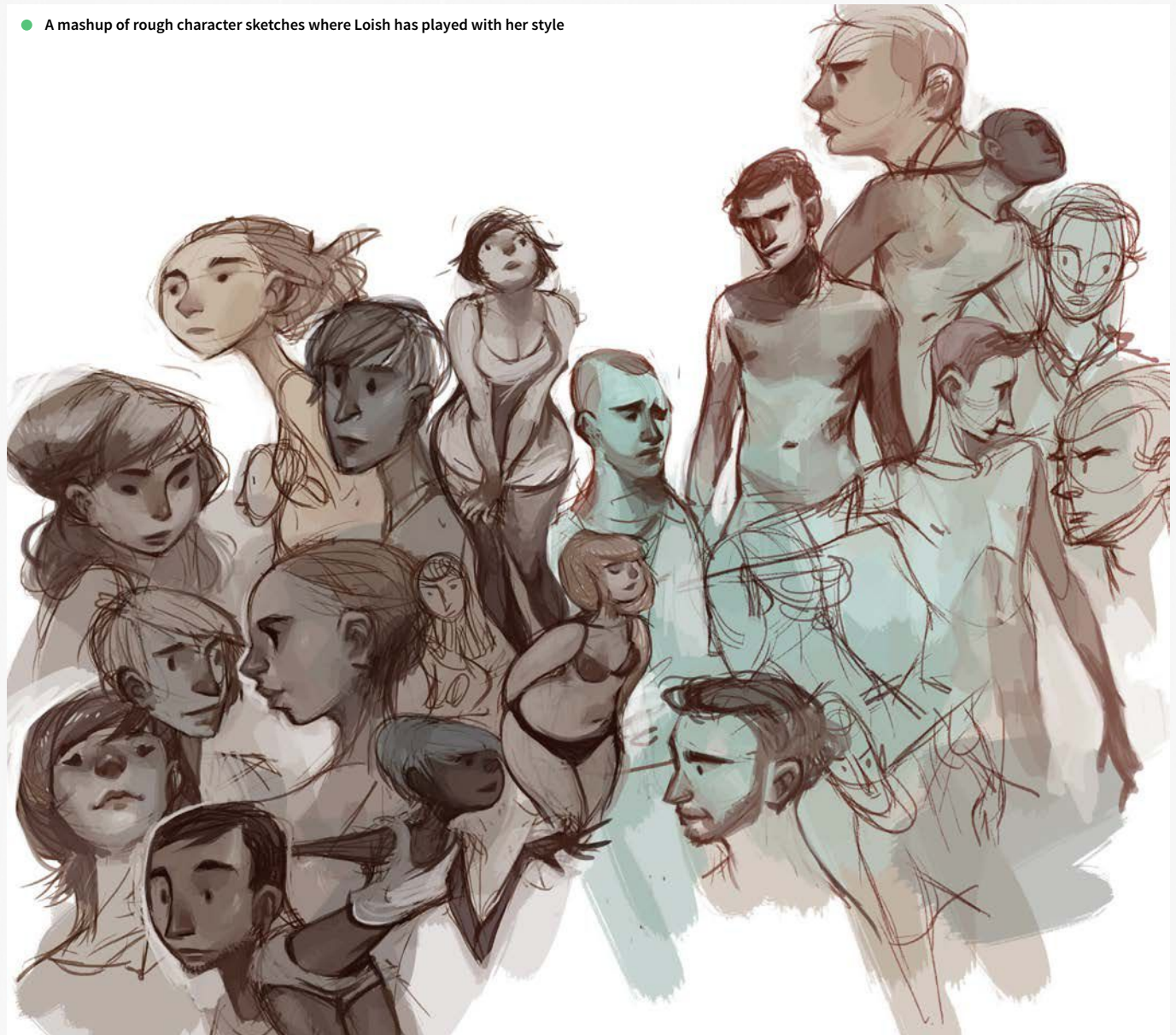
If you are a keen 2D artist or hobbyist, then there is a good chance that over the last six years, you will have come across the work of Lois van Baarle, or as she is more commonly known, Loish. Since she completed a degree in animation at the Utrecht School of the Arts, the Netherlands in 2009, Loish has worked as a freelance illustrator and animator.

Her projects have included work for high profile companies, including *The Leonardo Game* for CBBC, an animation with Psypop for Coca-Cola and projects for LEGO.

Loish's work has become highly popular, with her blog gaining a following of nearly 900,000 fans, while her DeviantArt page has received well over 8 million page views. In a relatively short space of time, Loish's stylized characters and colorful designs have captured the imaginations of many fans and fellow artists. To the delight of ►



● A series of cat studies taken from life



● A mashup of rough character sketches where Loish has played with her style



- Loish's work often features a soft glow of light which provides her work with a warm atmosphere



thousands of her fans, Loish launched her first Kickstarter campaign this month with the help of our parent company 3dtotal Publishing.

The project has been created to launch Loish's first ever artbook, *The Art of Loish: A look behind the scenes*; a compendium of her artwork, with insights into her progression as an artist. It will also include tips on how readers can improve their own work. The campaign has become an instant success, with the project meeting its target of £20,000 in less than two hours, and being selected as a Kickstarter Staff Pick within 24 hours. At the time of writing, the project has well over 5,000 backers, and the number is constantly on the increase. The overwhelming success of the campaign is a testament to Loish's stunning artwork, which we are lucky enough to be able to feature in this month's issue of 2dartist.

Here we talk to Loish about how she feels about the success of her campaign, what she has planned for the book, and where she plans to go next with her artwork.

**2dartist:** Hi Lois! Congratulations on the incredibly successful Kickstarter campaign! What was it like seeing the response from your fans?



**Lois van Baarle:** It was totally overwhelming! I really didn't expect for there to be this much interest in the book. We had to limit the number of signed copies within a couple of hours since the sheer amount of signed books and prints would have been too much to handle.

That was unfortunate news, but at the same time incredibly exhilarating, because it means that the response totally exceeded all expectations.

**2da:** Can you tell us a little bit about what you have planned for the book? ►



- *Locks* is a popular piece by Loish, which captures her talent for capturing mood and character





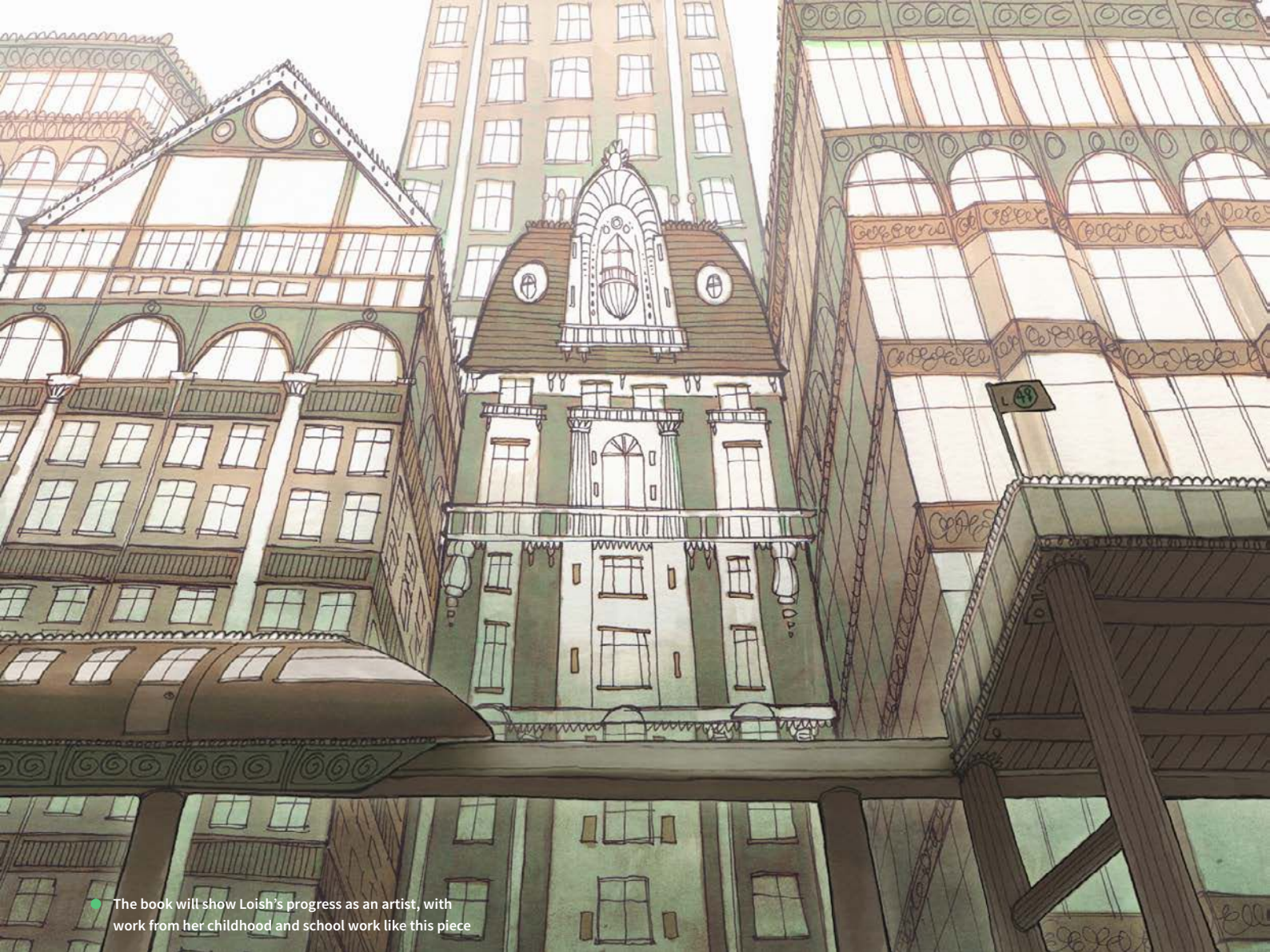




● *The Art of Loish: A look behind the scenes will feature remakes of old work including this remake of Summer*







- The book will show Loish's progress as an artist, with work from her childhood and school work like this piece

**LvB:** The book is going to address some of the things that my followers have been asking about for a very long time. They enjoy seeing my work but also want to know a lot about my thought process, techniques and how I learned to draw – basically, what goes on behind the scenes. This book is going to delve into these aspects and give a full picture of who I am as an artist, as well as showcase my artwork.

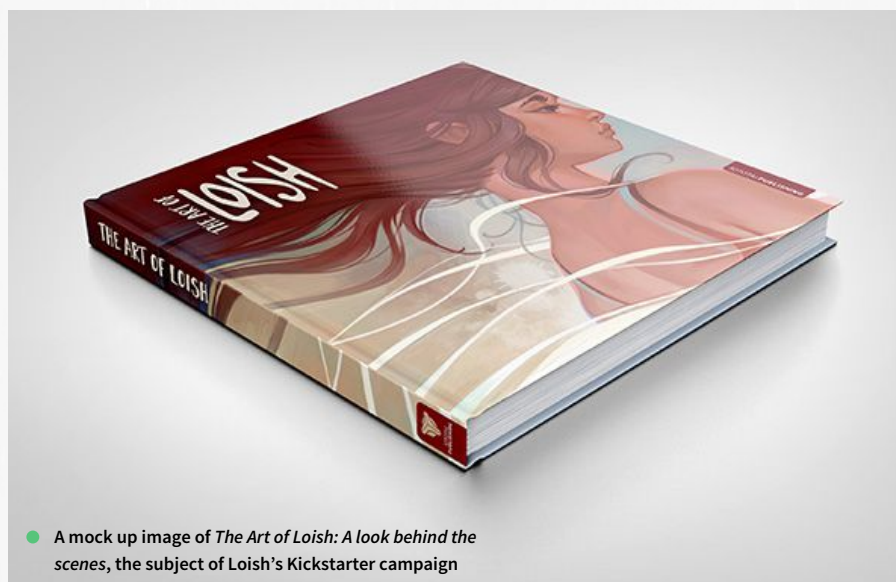
I hope to make something that's interesting for fans who want to know more, but also appealing for people who just want to flip through nice artwork.

**2da:** Is there a part of the project you are most looking forward to working on?

**LvB:** I'm just so excited about writing the book and being able to go into more depth than I usually do. I'm in the process of writing it now and I love seeing it come together!

**2da:** The book will feature some new artworks from you – can you tell us a little about the inspirations behind them?

**LvB:** I'd say my work has definitely taken more and more inspiration from nature in the last year or so.



- A mock up image of *The Art of Loish: A look behind the scenes*, the subject of Loish's Kickstarter campaign

I'm exploring a lot of beautiful settings and nature-inspired decorative elements, which will show in the exclusive pieces I have lined up for this book.

**2da:** And finally, we know that you're very busy with the book and your Kickstarter prizes at the moment, but what are your plans for the future? Are there any projects you can tell us about?

**LvB:** I still want to finish an animation project I've been working on since graduating animation school in 2009. I'd need to set aside a lot of time to do it, which is proving difficult in my freelance career so far. I'm still very excited to do it, and it would be a welcome change of pace to work on an animation project again, so I am definitely going to try and focus on that for my next personal project! ●





Loish likes to experiment with her style from time to time, as can be seen in this personal work



C L I C K   H E R E   F O R   D E T A I L S

Discover the delightful  
work of popular artist  
and illustrator Lois van  
Baarle (a.k.a. Loish) as she  
Kickstarts her first book:  
*The Art of Loish*

# THE ART OF LOISH



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# Sketching from the imagination : Sci-fi



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# Art Gallery

Each issue the 2dartist team selects 10 of the best digital images from around the world. Enjoy!



## **Like tears in the wind**

Efflam Mercier

Year created: 2014

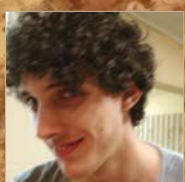
Web: [efflammercier.com](http://efflammercier.com)



Submit your images! Simply email [annie@3dtotal.com](mailto:annie@3dtotal.com)







**Epic**

Igor Braulio

Year created: 2015

Web: [igorbraulio.com](http://igorbraulio.com)





**Floating in  
a dream**

Alexey Egorov

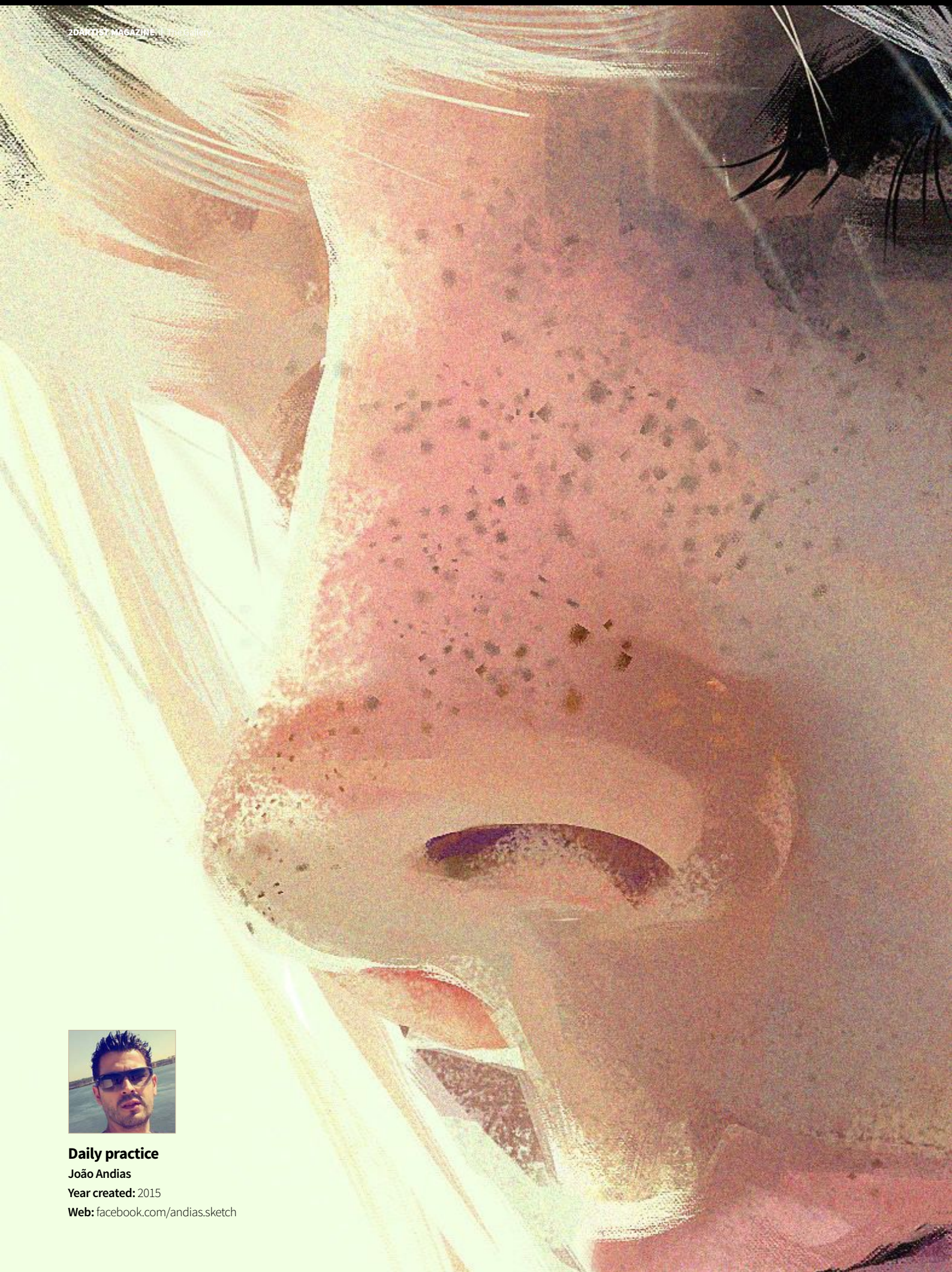
Year created: 2015

Web: [alexegorov.  
cgsociety.org](http://alexegorov.cgsociety.org)

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*Alexey Egorov*  
2015





**Daily practice**

João Andias

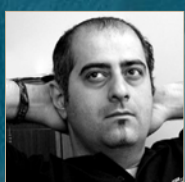
Year created: 2015

Web: [facebook.com/andias.sketch](https://facebook.com/andias.sketch)









**Portrait of Arash**

Ali Kiani Amin

Year created: 2015

Web: [facebook.com/ali.kianiamin](https://facebook.com/ali.kianiamin)





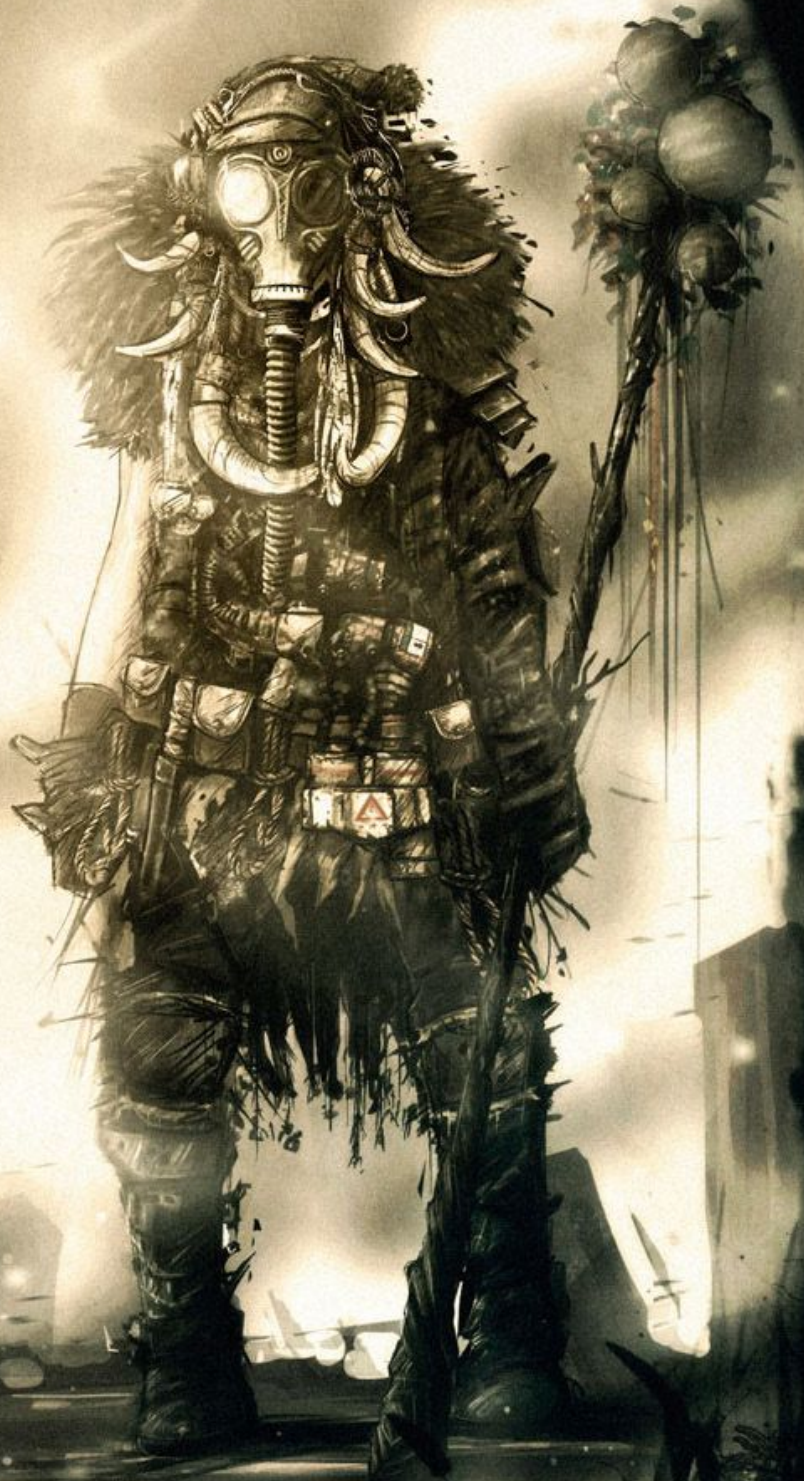
## Survival Voyager Spirit

Christian Benavides (BigHand Illustration)

Year created: 2015

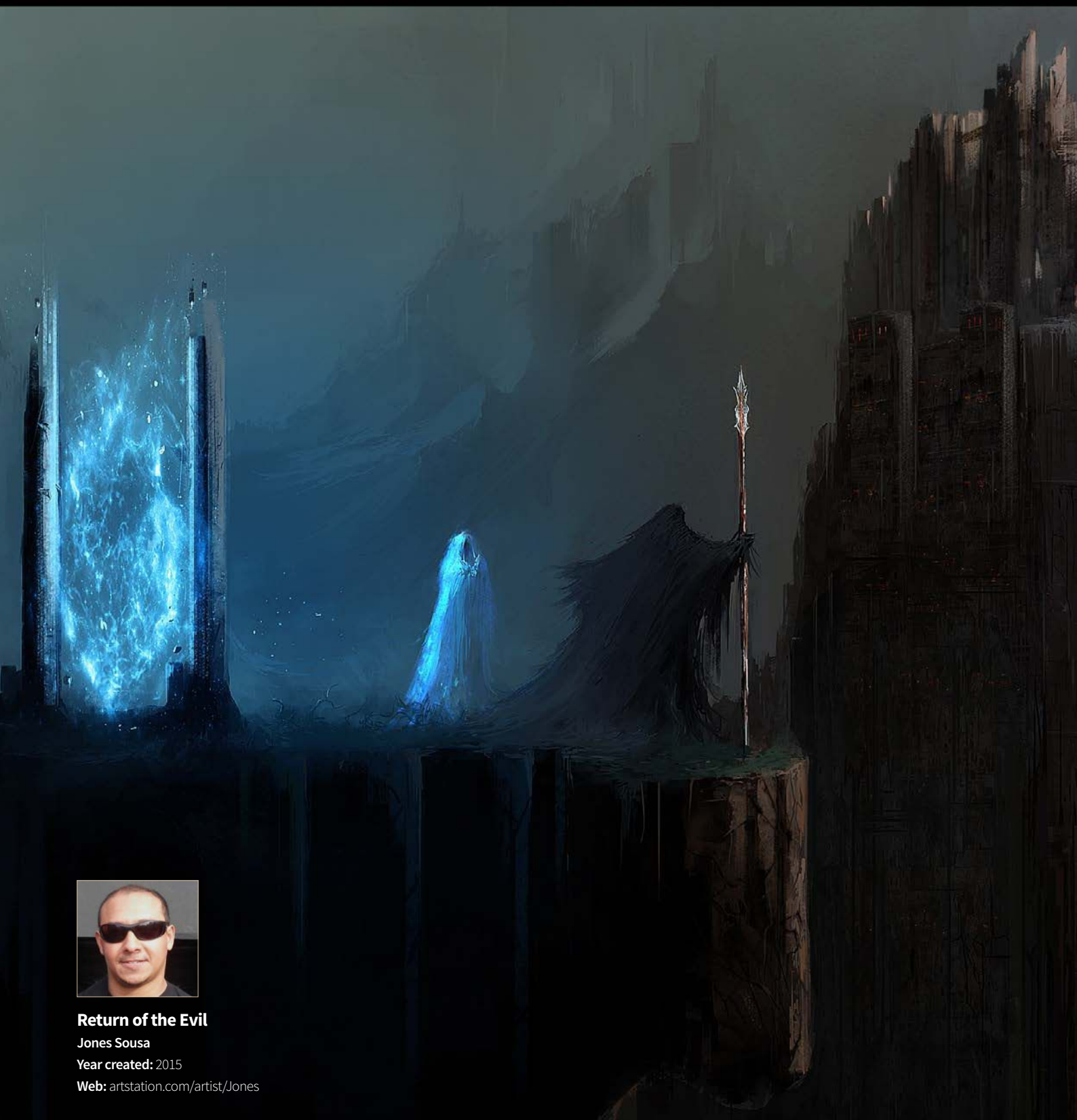
Web: [behance.net/BigHandIllustration](http://behance.net/BigHandIllustration)

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V·O·Y·A·G·E·R





## **Return of the Evil**

Jones Sousa

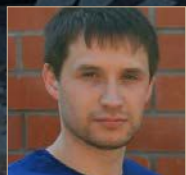
Year created: 2015

Web: [artstation.com/artist/Jones](http://artstation.com/artist/Jones)









**Some concept**

Sergey Pervukhin

Year created: 2015

Web: [artstation.com/artist/lespol](http://artstation.com/artist/lespol)









## War 1 : The Machine

Rupam Roychoudhury

Year created: 2014

Web: [artstation.com/artist/Tiger\\_999](http://artstation.com/artist/Tiger_999)

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## Trafalgar

Jose Julián Londoño Calle

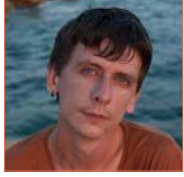
Year created: 2015

Web: [artstation.com/artist/handsdigitalstudio](http://artstation.com/artist/handsdigitalstudio)





## The Artist



**Rostyslav Zagornov**

[artstation.com/artist/attempte](https://artstation.com/artist/attempte)

**Software Used:**

Photoshop

Rostyslav Zagornov is an environment concept artist for 4A-Games Ltd., Malta. Originally from Ukraine, Rostyslav first started creating digital art four years ago when a friend sold him a Wacom tablet.



# Photo manipulate a monster

See how you can turn yourself into a sinister, flesh-hungry creature with Rostyslav Zagornov's photo manipulation tutorial [▶](#)



## Follow these helpful tips for a realistic image...

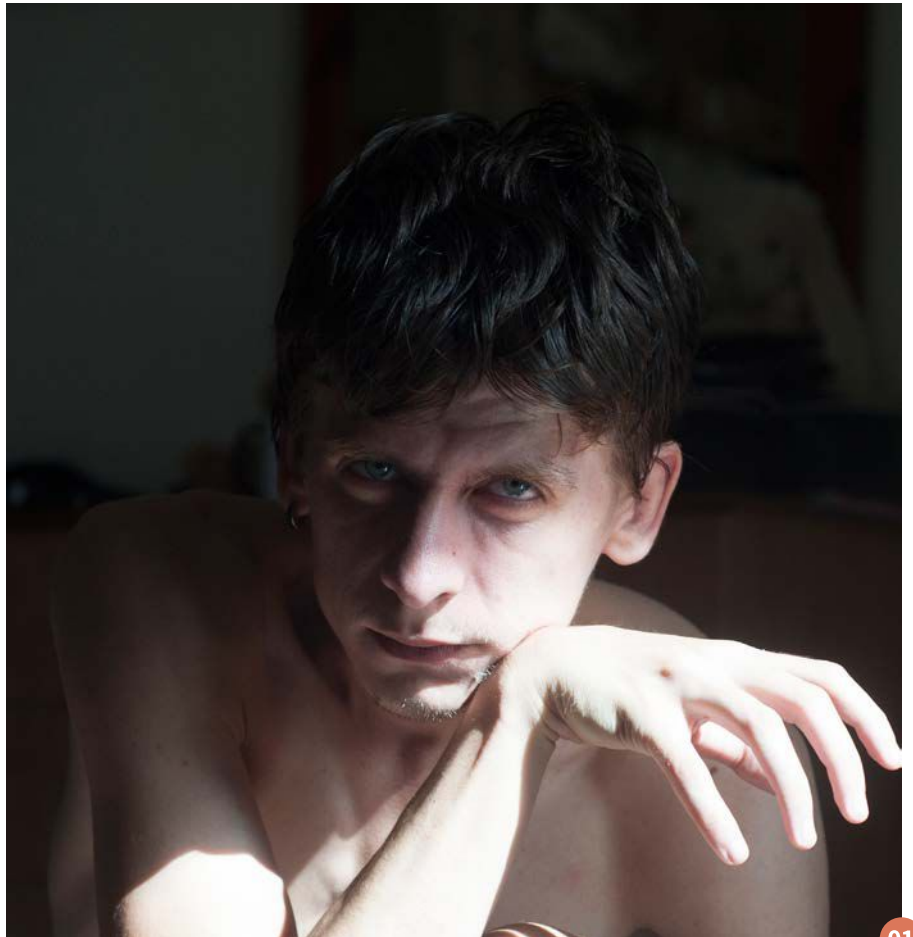
Today I will show you how I work with photo manipulation and over-painting techniques to create a character. Sure, it is possible to paint everything, but when you are working under a deadline, or when you need to complete several tasks at the same time; you have to use techniques which help to save your time. Some people say that it is not an 'artistically honest' way to create images, but I am on the side of the rational use of time saving tricks. So, I use photos and textures very often, and sometimes I help myself with some primitive modeling or sculpting in 3D. I am sure that no matter how you get your result, the main thing is whether your picture is interesting or not.

Today I will show you some techniques which I use in my work. For this piece I decided to create a horrible creature, using my own photos and some free textures from [www.freetextures.3dtotal.com](http://www.freetextures.3dtotal.com) and [www.cgtextures.com](http://www.cgtextures.com). I will show you some ways to compose different pictures into one, how to refine the image, and add some details and effects.

**01 The original photo:** I start with an original picture. I have never tried to do something with my own portrait, so I thought why not do it today? Okay, so after a little work in Adobe Camera Raw, I give the picture more contrast to create a more interesting shadow and lighting effect. In future steps we will work with the existing lighting, and it is very important not to leave it, or we will leave the volume too.

**02 Design the composition:** As you can see in the original picture, the face is placed a little uncomfortably from the point of composition, so I enlarge the picture to move the face closer to the camera. After this, I remove some details that I don't want to see, such as the wall, cabinet and my wife's soft toys behind me. I just paint over them with a black Soft brush. I also decide to remove the hand, so I paint over it with the same Soft brush, using the existing colors on the chest and shoulders.

**03 Create textures:** Now, I decide to create some shapes which can help me in the ►



01



02

**01** Start with a photograph and adjust the contrast to make the lighting and shadow more interesting

**02** Adjust the composition and remove any unwanted background details





future. Sometimes you cannot find the required references or textures, so in this situation you have only one exit; to create them yourself. So, I do a very quick, more or less primitive face in ZBrush and the same quick textures in Mudbox. After 40-50 minutes I have a basic 3D shape with texture, ready to use with photo bashing and over-painting.

**04 Add 3D to Photoshop:** Now I open the 3D shape in Photoshop and begin to fit it

to the face. The very important thing to remember here is the lighting. I use masks and a Soft brush to manipulate the 3D face into different areas of the original face.

**05 Adjust the face:** In this step I use some transform tools to fit some texture details to the original face: forehead to forehead, chin to chin and so on. I also remove the ears as they are too 'usual.' I make some color adjustments using Color Balance and Hue/Saturation to make the

visible parts of the 3D face similar to the original in color and contrast.

**06 Make it realistic:** Now it is time to change the original head and face shapes, to make them more closely resemble a human's. I use the Liquify tool for this process. I try to work very carefully, changing the shape of the skull and the front side of the face. I also make the creature's nose flatter and make the chin longer.





06



07

**07 Add sinister eyes:** Okay, so we can see that we have a new creature. It is close to human but now we also understand that it is not human. I want to change the eyes, so I just paint over the original with a Soft brush and make them fully gray-white, giving them a 'blind' look. It is actually an old trick, but it always works when you need to make your creatures look a bit more sinister. I'm careful to remember where the light source is placed, and add some highlights to the creature's eyes.

**08 Paint fine details:** Here I bring back his ears, but I deform them with the warp tool and Liquify. Now, I use a small (2-5 pixel brush) and begin to add some little extra details to my creature's skin, lips, eyes, and so on. I also ►



08

- 03** Use 3D software to design your own references and textures
- 04** Fit the 3D shape to the photographic face in Photoshop
- 05** Use transform tools to match the 3D face to the photograph
- 06** Shape the face using the Liquify tool to make it more realistic
- 07** Paint over the eyes to make the creature more sinister
- 08** Add the ears and some fine details to the skin





09a

add some pigmented spots, some scars and blisters. On top of this I add a texture of blood splatter onto the creature's face. It is really long and accurate work, so don't rush it.

**09 Use texture for details:** Now I am going to add little details to the creature's head. These details, like spittle, beads of sweat, and hairs, are the thing which makes our character realistic and believable. I decide to add some white paint on his forehead and upper lip, something like face paintings for a tribal battle. I use a texture, put it in a place, and check its position with the opacity level. After this I use masks and a sharp brush to show some parts of the paint texture.

This effect, for me, can show that our creature has some elements of civilization. It can suffer from mutations or degradation. I go on working with little details, sometimes I have to paint even the pores in the creature's skin.

I add some blood splatter and grunge texture to the chest, because it looks too clean and



09b



10

bald for me. I do these with more or less the same contrasts and color tones, and add some blurriness because these textures look too sharp.

**10 Draw on veins:** Now I paint the smallest details like veins or little hairs on the creature's cheeks. I use a Soft low-flow brush for painting first, and then a sharper brush for painting second. If the details are too sharp I make them blurrier.

**11 Final adjustments:** I now start to add the last details. Besides the little veins and hair on the creature's chin, I add spit. This can make his look more hungry and dangerous.

I also think that his hand does not look very good, so I decide to remove it. I take a photograph of my chest and put it into the image, using the same techniques, tweaking the Brightness/Contrast and Hue/Saturation settings.



11a



11b



11c



Now I want to add some objects to the front plan. It can help to give some more depth to our image. It can be something like metal grids or pillars, whatever you like.

**12** **The finished artwork:** For the final stage, I give my picture a little more contrast and add some soft noise. Now, we are there! The finished piece!

Thank you to everyone for following this tutorial and thank you to the 2dartist team for the invitation! I hope this tutorial will help you to push your skills. Good luck! ●

**09a** Create extra details with a texture by using masks and a sharp brush

**09b** Then add a grungy texture to the chest

**10** Draw in veins and small hairs using a Soft low-flow brush

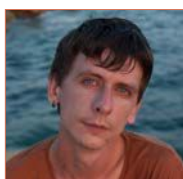
**11a** Make the creature look hungry by adding spit

**11b** Use another photograph to make corrections to the composition

**11c** Add appropriate scene objects to the image



## The Artist



**Rostyslav Zagornov**  
[artstation.com/artist/attemme](https://artstation.com/artist/attemme)



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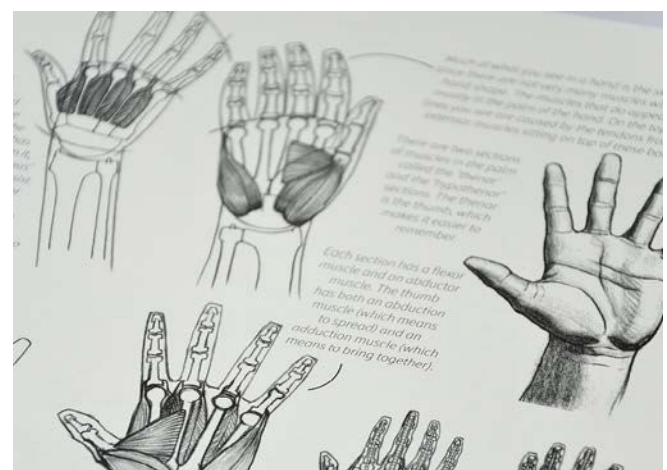
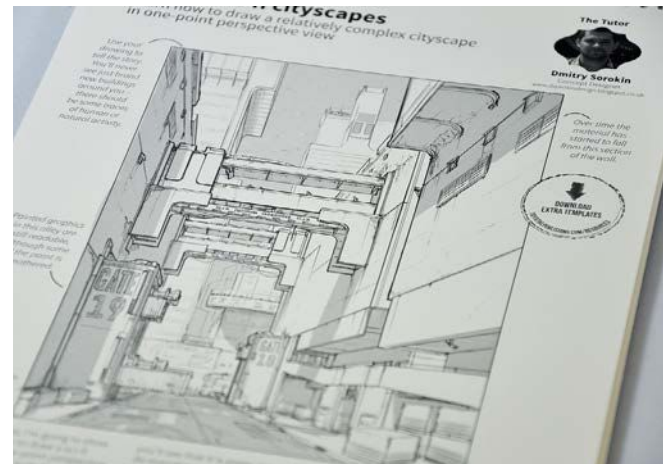
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## The Artist



**Ioan Dumitrescu**

[ioandumitrescu.com](http://ioandumitrescu.com)

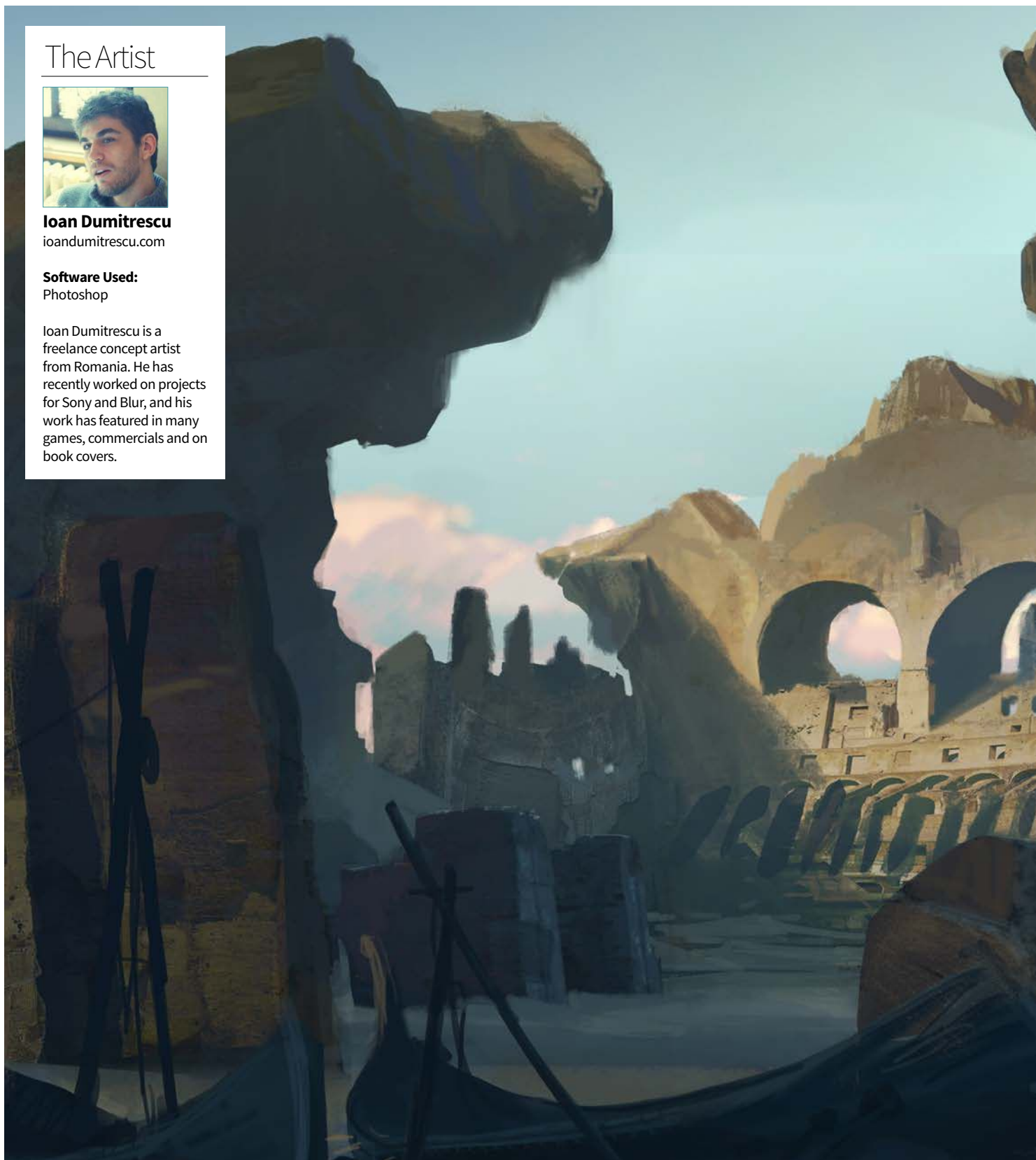
**Software Used:**

Photoshop

Ioan Dumitrescu is a freelance concept artist from Romania. He has recently worked on projects for Sony and Blur, and his work has featured in many games, commercials and on book covers.

# Speed paint an ancient ruin

Learn how to create an interesting ruin composition in only two hours with this tutorial by Ioan Dumitrescu [▶](#)









## Test yourself with this speedy painting tutorial...

Hi guys, I usually start these speed painting exercises with a couple of thoughts in mind, and for this piece it is ancient times, fallen civilizations and how I can show this central meeting ground left to become dust after a civilization has fallen!

I start this speed painting with the antiquity of enormous amphitheaters, spas and historic public buildings where people gathered around to watch epic spectacles and cheer their favorite gladiators in mind. Speed paints are a great way to train your eye in composition, light and color. Following a time frame of, in this case, only two hours, makes you think of what is important; conscious of your decisions and think of what to do in order to be on time.

**01** **Source references:** First thing's first, as this speed paint is based on what the ancient world built, we need to gather our references so they can help us recreate the type of architecture and constructions they used to build. For this I reference my own photos taken on a trip in Rome.

Try looking at how these huge structural elements were built without any concrete pillars or metal crossbeams, and so on. We can also see how in time the buildings fell apart. Scale is to be an important factor in this painting, and thus we need to see how we can simplify things. Time is of the essence.

**02** **Create basic color:** Now we have some references, we can lay in some big shapes for our color sketch. I'm thinking of those late afternoons that you get during the late spring, with beautiful cyan skies and the sun having a very clean light, so to say. My thoughts are to make a coliseum-like structure with a huge dome on top that has crumbled, with a lot of ruins around where people might still dwell.

I put in a basic ground texture and adjust its values and color to imply a shadowed land. I add a few big ruins towards the foreground, making sure I hit one with light so it connects with the background dome. The whole scene inspires me to take it towards a desert-like terrain, and because of this I bring in a contrasting element of boats ruined in the foreground.

This could be a reminder of a time when this was lush, and have small docks along its side. Maybe along the arena there was a huge market place!







02



03

**03** **Add some references:** We can make use of the photos we have by pasting them in and adjusting the colors until they fit into the scene. I try to let the base color bleed through the blues and yellows, it will give a more realistic look in the end.

Now my concern is to start defining the composition and spatial layout of things. The first sketch isn't epic enough so I just scale things up so they can take over the canvas and overwhelm the viewer. I'm trying to find cool shapes for the ruins, and with them create the shadows. The

play between light and dark is very important for the composition.

I want to reach a painterly but real look, so I have to cover most of the photos up. I can't let my references decide for me what the image will be.

I use the time constraints to my advantage and try to create mystery to actually let the viewer fill in the information. The ruins become paravents, showing only glimpses of what is behind them, a glimpse of what the world was and how beautiful it must have been. ►

**01** Source references that fit with your intended theme. They can provide some interesting shapes

**02** Quickly sketch out a composition including rough ideas of light and color

**03** Adding references to your sketch is a quick way to build up the image





04



05

I certainly look for evocative images in my work, images that speak out to the viewer and rely on their emotions.

**04 Add interest:** At this stage I flip the image horizontally and vertically. I don't hold on to anything in it, I want things to come naturally, and forcing my way in only to break things up. So the scene is starting to build up, and I add more textures and play with the colors. I add in a bit more red brick with dark saturated blues. I also add columns and arches above the coliseum hinting at multiple levels and what could be

beyond it. I break up the mass on the right, so the eye has a way of slowing down towards the edge of the frame, resting, and then going back using the shadow and light play.

**05 Refine structural shapes:** The chunks of buildings I've put on the left, blocking the view of the background, are too flat for my liking and destroy the scale. They might have worked in the end to show a round perimeter, but my intentions are different. So I decide to cut through it and place three pillar-like structures that might have supported the building before

the dome crash. Now I further refine the shape of the galleries, wanting to keep everything relatively epic in scale. Once I incorporate the people it will be more obvious.

Regarding colors, I try to have lots of warm brown in there, just to show off the ambiance it will get from a streak of light on the ground, leading to the structures on the right of the middleground.

**06 Seek structural realism:** The sharp break in the ruin of the dome is defying the scale and gravity a bit, so I quickly turn it into





06



07

### “With the help of the broken dome I keep focus on what matters in the image”

something more massive. It now has real weight, so shows what extreme forces this building had to support. Its very common throughout history to have domes collapsing, as it is an incredibly hard building technique to master, and they only reached their full majestic quality through buildings such as the Pantheon, Saint Sophia, San Pietro, and so on.

I use the masts of the ships to further block the edge of the frame, and with the help of the broken dome I keep focus on what matters in the image. You can see in fig. 06 how my composition follows along the red line, taking the viewer's eye along the whole image.

**07 Add people for scale:** Now its time to put in the tiny humans at the bottom

edge of the middleground structure. I add two people in oriental clothing in discussion, like their surroundings are nothing special to them. Sadly we humans have the tendency to not appreciate the good that we have around us.

I continue to add further detailing along the dome structure, tightening certain parts of interest while others recede into shadow.

**08 Finishing touches:** As a last touch, I think the image needs some spicing up. The lit portion of the middleground structure is a bit too equal with the background. I thought I'd make the light a bit more filtered, and use darker red tones, as well as on the ground. It might be from all the bricks turning basically into red dust. I think it separates things nicely and also gives more atmosphere to the piece.

I hope you enjoyed the process and it will help you with yours! ●

**04** Add textures and play with the colors to create more interest

**05** Add depth to the ruins and check the scale of the image

**06** Build up the broken dome so that it looks like a structure that might physically have existed. The red lines show how the viewer's eye will travel around the image

**07** Adding two tiny people near the lower right side of the image provides a sense of scale

**08** After some small adjustments to the middleground, light and color, here is the final image!



## The Artist



**Ioan Dumitrescu**  
[ioandumitrescu.com](http://ioandumitrescu.com)









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# beginner's guide to sketching

characters, creatures & concepts

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# Step into the eye of the storm

Paint a storm in action in the latest chapter of our Altering Environments series! Film and videogame artist Kristian Llana guides us through his the process [▶](#)



## The Artist

---



**Kristian Llana**

[kristianllana.carbonmade.com](http://kristianllana.carbonmade.com)

**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

Kristian Llana is a freelance concept artist and illustrator originally from Albania, Europe. He is currently based in New York and working for companies in the entertainment industry, specializing in film and videogame art.





## Whip up a storm with photo bash techniques...

In this tutorial you will see step by step how to create concept art for movies and videogames. You will learn how to put together different photos to create a cinematic scene painting. The scene I am creating here is set in the center of a storm on a modern American highway. This tutorial will show you how to develop a sense of motion by using photo compositing techniques.

**01 Find references and sketch ideas:** It is very important to look at real world examples when you are beginning a new painting, but I'm pretty sure that you must have heard this from almost every artist out there by now.

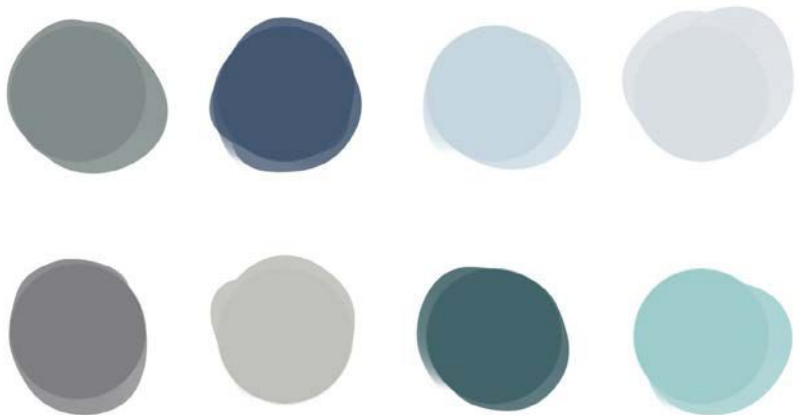
As soon as the idea hits my imagination I start to photo-research. Search engines are your best friend here. All I am searching for are pictures that come close to a real life storm. Use any keyword that comes to your mind. For example, I am searching now for: storm happening, storm, hurricane, running storm, flying cars, and dusty highway. Searching for references is useful not only to pull up images you can bash later, it is useful for a lot of things such as selecting the color and mood of the painting. A slight change in hue can change the overall feeling of the whole painting, for better or worse. Sometimes you hit the jackpot with the right plate image to start with, which is the best thing.

Once I have gathered all the references I need, I start to sketch; although you will most probably go back to your references throughout the whole process. I usually go for four sketches, but it can always be more depending on the project.



01

## Color Scheme/Mood.



02

Now is the time to start thinking about your composition. In this image for example, I am trying to create a cinematic scene. This will most likely be a painting for a key frame in a movie scene. At this stage I don't really worry about how the sketch looks because everything is going to be replaced with the references instead. It is meant to only be a rough sketch to get your idea

out. I'm sketching based on one of the photo plates I got when I searched for references.

**02 Decide on color:** After I've decided the composition in my sketches, and I am sure that's the one I want to proceed further with, I start looking for color examples. I already have an idea of what colors I want so I start looking at



03





04

**“Photo compositing is one of the most powerful tools in concept art regardless of whether it is for AAA games or the VFX industry”**

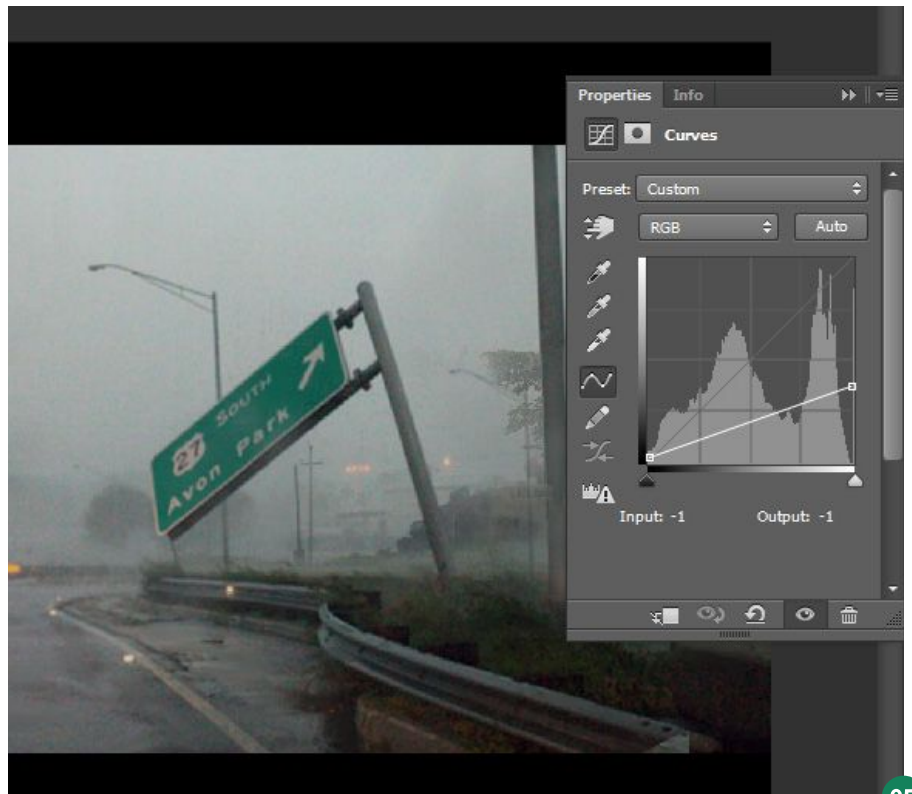
real life pictures close to the kind of color scheme that I want.

This step really defines the mood of your painting, and is no less important than the other steps before. Like I said in step one, the research you did will become useful at this stage, even though you may still want to look for some more examples. I decide that these colors (fig. 02) will be my color scheme. This is exactly what I had pictured in my head, so now I have a color scheme I can always go back to.

**03 A note on photo compositing:** Photo compositing is one of the most powerful tools in concept art regardless of whether it is for AAA games or the VFX industry. This step is actually one of the main reasons we do photo research; so we can later use the photos we gathered. It is the best if you are lucky enough to start with a photo plate; it's going to make it so much easier.

**04 Photo compositing:** Now I am trying to make the photo compositing efficient. I like first of all to fix the value of the image I am trying to fit in and then deal with fixing the color.

I use a black layer on color mode which makes everything below black and white, this way I can now tweak the image and make it fit in the value. I am using the Curves tool, but you can use Levels as well. Using dust is a good way to make things fit in.



05

**05 Adjust the tone:** I decide that I really need to tone everything down. I think it will give a better impact on the viewer if the whole scene is made to be darker. I do this very quickly by using the curves tab from the drop-down menu, and I put it on top of everything so it affects everything below the layer itself.

**06 Color balance:** Now I am using Color Balance and the Hue/Saturation tool. I realized that I need to go more towards the blue end of the color spectrum. For some reason it gives me a more dynamic impact. Don't be afraid to play with colors at any moment, as I have said ▶

**01** Sketch out a rough idea based on your reference images

**02** To define the mood of your painting, create a color scheme based on your ideas and references

**03** Photo compositing is one of the most powerful tools in concept art

**04** Fix the value of your image then adjust the color to suit your composition

**05** Change the tone of the scene by using the curves tab

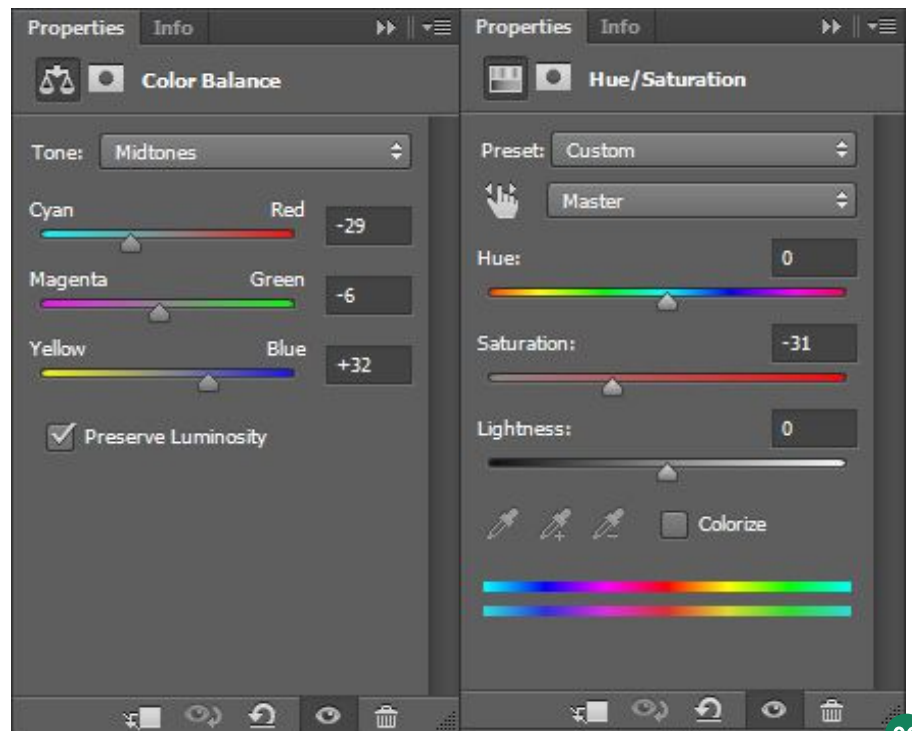


**“What I am doing now is looking for ways I can improve the painting – how can I get my message through?”**

above, a slight change in hue and saturation can affect the whole image for better or for worse. Let's just hope you affect it for the better.

**07 Paint more atmospheric drama:** In this step much is going through my mind, as for me there is always room to make something better. What I am doing is looking for ways I can improve the painting – how can I get my message through? I just realized that in order to really show the storm happening I simply need to add the STORM. As funny as it sounds, it's true.

I need to create more drama in the scene, with a lot of dust going up on the street. I create the whole storm by using a Cloud brush, which anyone who is even a little bit into concept art and digital painting should have.

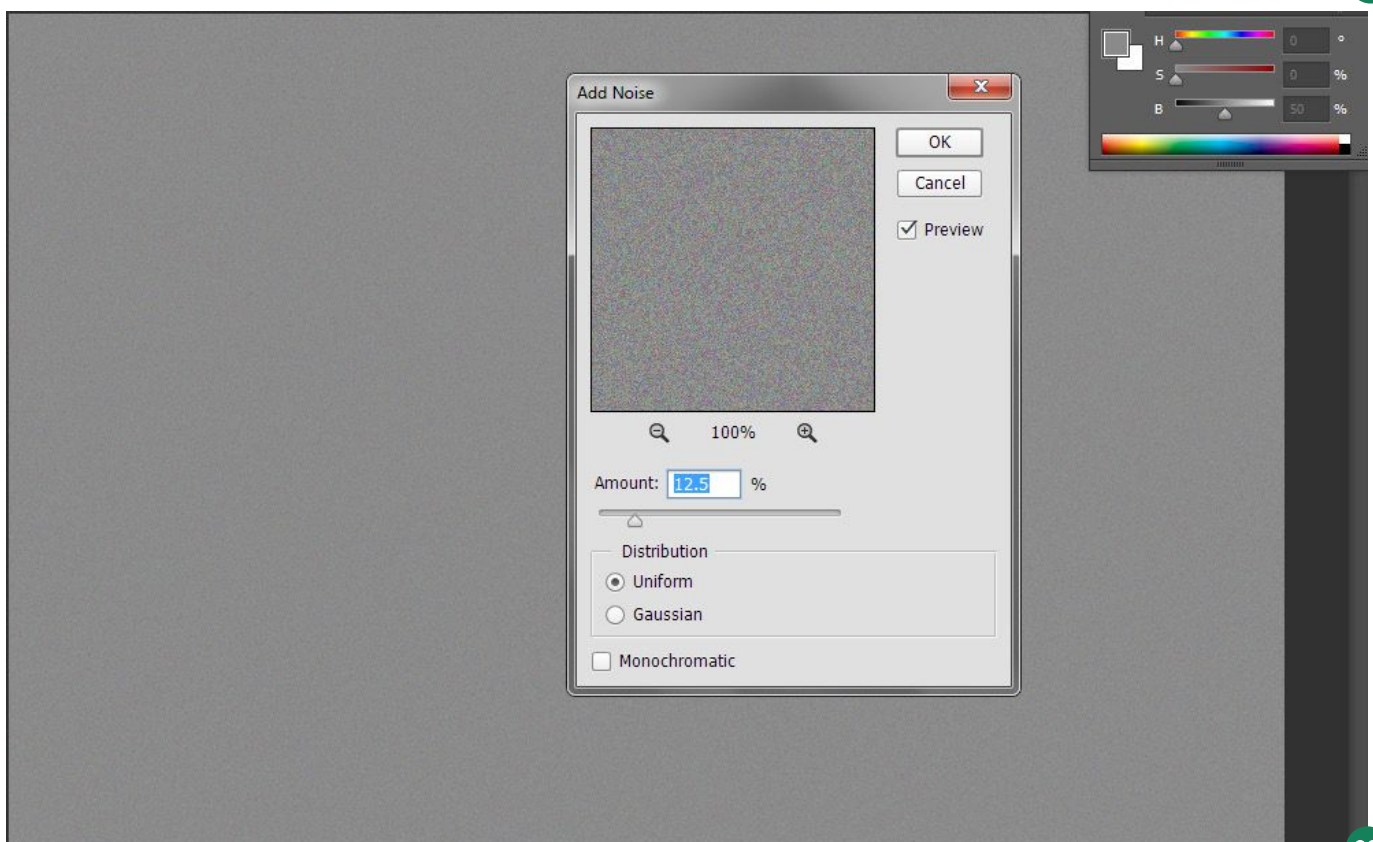


06



07





**08 Over painting:** After putting everything together it is time to have some brush fun. For this step I am using the Mixer brush tool and the Smudge tool.

These two tools are the best ones to give a photo the painterly feeling I am after. This step really helps to unify everything in the scene and mix the photos all together.

**09 The very last touches:** In this step I create a new layer and then use the shortcut Ctrl+Alt+Shift+E which is the SUPER MERGE. Now I am creating a copy layer of this and I am going to: Filter > High Pass > set to 2.1, then put the whole layer on Overlay mode. I use this

instead of something like sharpening, which is just a personal choice.

The last thing that I need to do is to click on Create new layer, and set the color to neutral gray with 50% in the brightness slider.

I fill the layer after this by going to Filters > Noise > Add Noise and set the amount to 12.5% and the distribution to 'Uniform'. I click OK, and now I just put that layer on Overlay mode, in 59% opacity.

All of this is to create a film grain, which not only makes the whole image unified, but blends everything together so that it is hard to tell the brushstroke from the photo. ●

**06** Use Color Balance and the Hue/Saturation tools to give your painting more dynamic impact

**07** Adding dust with a cloud brush to show the center of the storm creates atmospheric drama

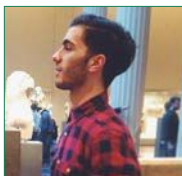
**08** Use the Mixer brush and Smudge tools to unify the image and give it a more painterly look

**09** Add the final touches to the image using super merge, reduce brightness and create a film grain



## The Artist

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**Kristian Llana**

[kristianllana.carbonmade.com](http://kristianllana.carbonmade.com)







K R I S T I A N   L L A N A



A digital painting of a woman with long, flowing pink hair, looking down and to the left. She is wearing a dark, strapless top. The background is a soft, light pink and white wash.

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117

Issue 117 | September 2015

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We interview Loish, a.k.a. Lois van Baarle about her first art book and Kickstarter campaign

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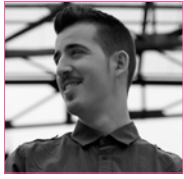
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## The Artist



### **Pablo Carpio**

[artstation.com/artist/pablocarpio](https://artstation.com/artist/pablocarpio)

### **Software Used:**

SketchUp, DazStudio, Photoshop

Since completing a Fine Arts degree, Pablo Carpio is a freelance artist based in Madrid. He loves that the fresh style of digital art re-imagines the epic Romanticism of art.



# Play with challenging perspectives

Improve your design techniques with Pablo Carpio's guide to creating an eye catching air vehicle from an interesting angle ▶



## Tackle a tricky perspective and advance your skills...

In this tutorial I will show the process of creating an illustration of a spaceship seen from below. From the beginning, you will see how I make a difference between what can be the concept design of a vehicle and an illustration of it. The first will be more related to the achievement of a functional approach. The second one is more focused on the aesthetic of the whole piece, including the environment in which it is located. Because of this, I will focus the tutorial on explaining the painting techniques more than on the design guides. I will tackle the perspective as the first tricky point, and continue with the behavior of color and light in hard surfaces. I will also give some tips for details and effects to achieve an epic mood and atmosphere.

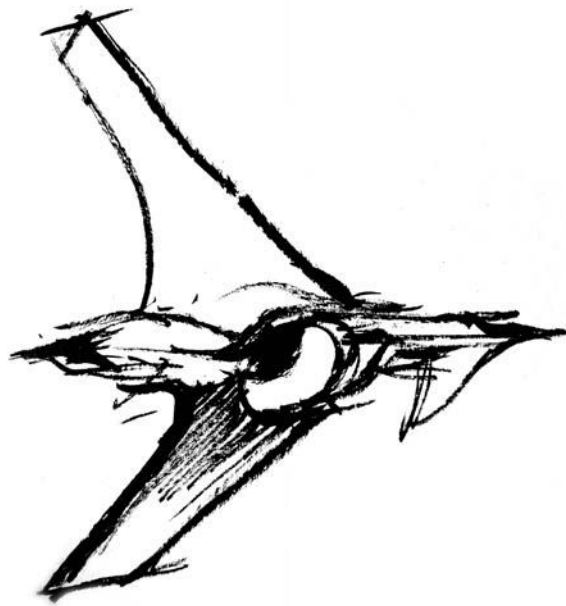
In this type of work, in which the functionality of the design is less important than the appeal of the final image, I change the design itself during the process, changing parts and shapes while I paint. Plus, the vehicle in this case is adapted to the perspective, which means that I made it look good from this view specifically, and it's because of this that I decide to make a vertical design, where the wing is the protagonist of the composition.

My main objective is to show you a process that you can use not only to copy something similar to this image, but use for every other piece. I hope to give you some tips and advice that can help you achieve an attractive mood and appeal in your work!

**01 A brief brainstorm:** The first step consists of making a fast design of the main piece for our illustration: the spaceship. I do not spend more than twenty minutes when making some sketches. At this point I don't reach a finished and detailed design, but I decide a couple of basic ideas that will be developed in the following steps.

In this case, those ideas are that the vehicle is going to have two vertical wings, and it's going to be divided at the center by a ring that will produce the energy to move it. This is more like an exercise to start the 'inspiration engines' for the next steps!

**02 Sketching the composition:** In this step I continue to visualize how the final composition is going to look. As in the first step, I make some sketches with different ideas, but as I already know that the topic is to make a



**01** Fast sketch to get ideas about shapes, form and style. Create two basic key points: the ring and the vertical wing

**02** Always try to find guidelines in your compositions, so the viewer can 'read' easily all the elements of the image





spaceship seen from below, this process is easier and faster.

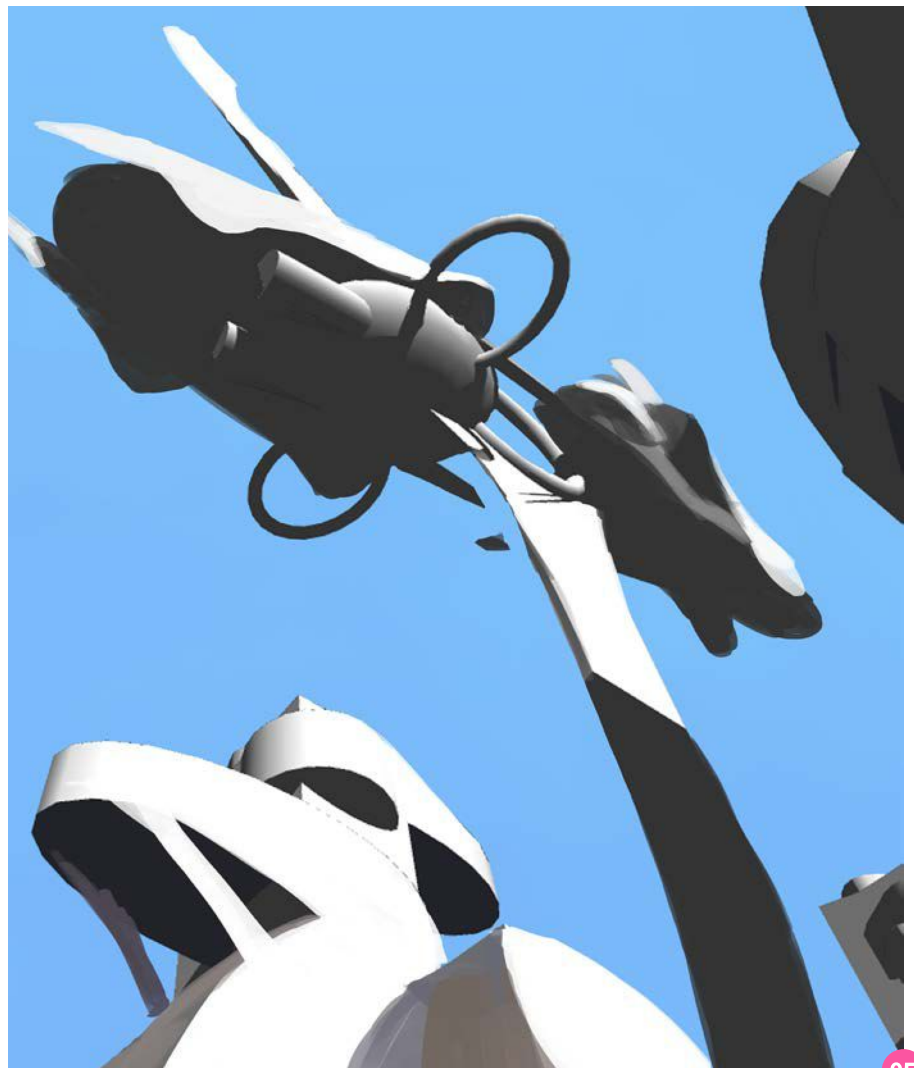
After a couple of drawings, I make a final one with the vehicle in the center of the image, surrounded by buildings to emphasize the scale and the perspective, with a boy at the bottom looking up to it. I use the wing as a diagonal line to guide the eye from the figure to the spacecraft.

### 03 **Blockmesh design of the spaceship:**

As I said at the beginning, my designs change as I develop them during the different steps. Once I know how I want the spaceship to look in terms of basic shape, I make a fast 3D model, just with some boxes, spheres and cones in SketchUp. Honestly, this is almost the first time that I have used this program, so don't be afraid, and experiment with it the same way I do!

When I do this kind of rough and random design, I don't stress if some vertices or planes are distorted. I use this as a base to understand the perspective and the point of light, and then paint over it. So don't panic if some parts look strange, just have fun and find something that fits with your taste. This is not even the final form!

**04 The 3D composition:** The composition can be easily created using a conic perspective with one or two focal points, leaving the horizon line at the bottom of the image or even outside of the canvas. However, I create a brief design in SketchUp for the vehicle and the





buildings around to have a three-dimensional base, and use it in the final image.

Using 3D programs at the beginning of the piece can give us the opportunity to change the size, place and form of each element of the artwork, locate the point of view and the light focus, which allow us to save a lot of time and gain a huge range of perspectives and ideas very fast.

Now I have decided where everything is going to be placed, it is time to export a 2D capture and start painting!

**05 Making the initial shape:** Once I finally have the blockmesh in Photoshop, it is time to start painting the basis of the final shapes of the spaceship, and the buildings, with some strong strokes. As you can see, I already know that the principal focus of light is going to come from the right side of the composition (keep that in mind for the rest of the painting!)

I keep a similar design to the one I made in my previous artwork, *An Angel*. I opt for an 'organic' shape in the fuselage, bending the front part down like a fish head. In fact, *Fomalhaut* (the name of the spacecraft), means 'fish mouth' in Arabic, and is the name of a star, in the Piscis Austrinus constellation.

**06 Texture the shape:** In this step I'm going to get rid of the flat color base to start painting in a more detailed way. As I don't want to use any third-party images, I opt for using my own work *An Angel* as a texture. Luckily, this image fits well with what I want to achieve, since the back view of the vehicle can be easily relocated and deformed to adjust it to the new spaceship perspective. I use it several times, using the mode layer Clarify at around 50% opacity. At ►



**03** Make a less compact design, more stylish and with some details at the back, like a couple of extra rings

**04** As you can see, 3D allow us to reach a realistic perspective, including the distortion created by the angle of vision of the objective

**05** It is always important to find balance between the storytelling and the design of your pieces, so that everything has its purpose

**06** When using images as textures, try to find shapes, forms and colors that you find useful in your work

## ⚡ PRO TIP

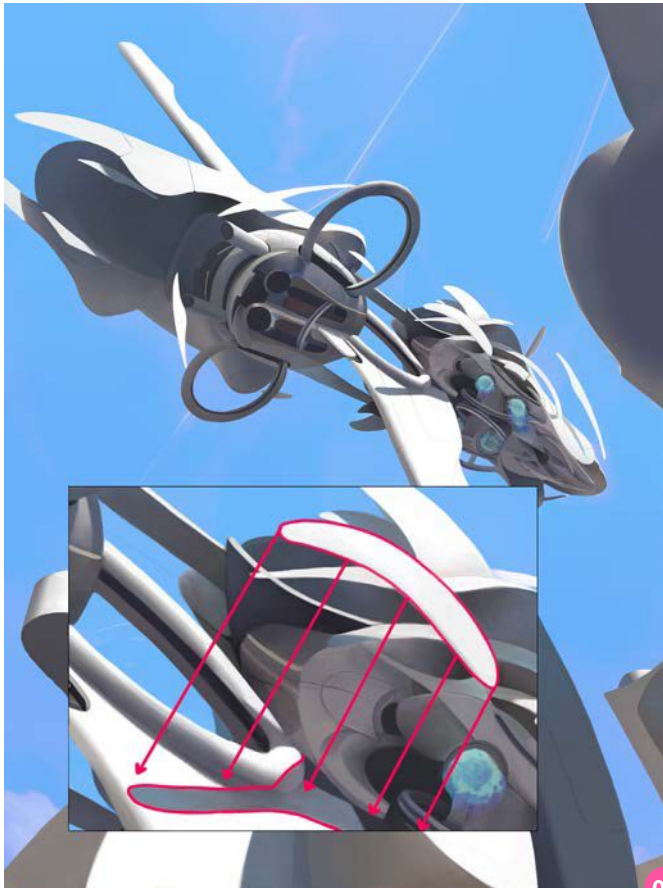
### Keep your portfolio sharp

The only way to get noticed in the community is to keep constantly upgrading your work. By posting only one fan art every three months, nobody will notice you. Draw every day, during the night, in your spare time, whenever, but DO IT. The time you spend thinking 'I'm not going to reach that level' is time that you are not improving.

Show your work to others, get involved in the community and don't stay hidden in your room. But most of all, paint. Less than one year ago I was sitting at my desk without any knowledge about a proper workflow or a professional technique to paint. Then I started painting seriously, meeting people and asking for feedback, and my journey had begun!

06





07

the same time, this allows me to filter the strong black at the bottom of the spaceship and the buildings.

Always be careful when using photographs in your work! It's important to have in mind the light direction, the perspective of the image, the angle of the camera that has been used to take the picture, and even the resolution of the image.

**07 Final shape and details:** Relax! It may seem like there's a lot missing between the last step and this one, but the main thing is that this step is just about playing with the random shapes from the last step, and painting over them to reach a detailed and symmetrical final form.

Here's one of my favorite tips, and something that I always try to do in my paintings: use the randomness as part of your workflow. Sometimes, we need an 'accidental phenomenon' to use as a catalyst for the best designs and ideas.

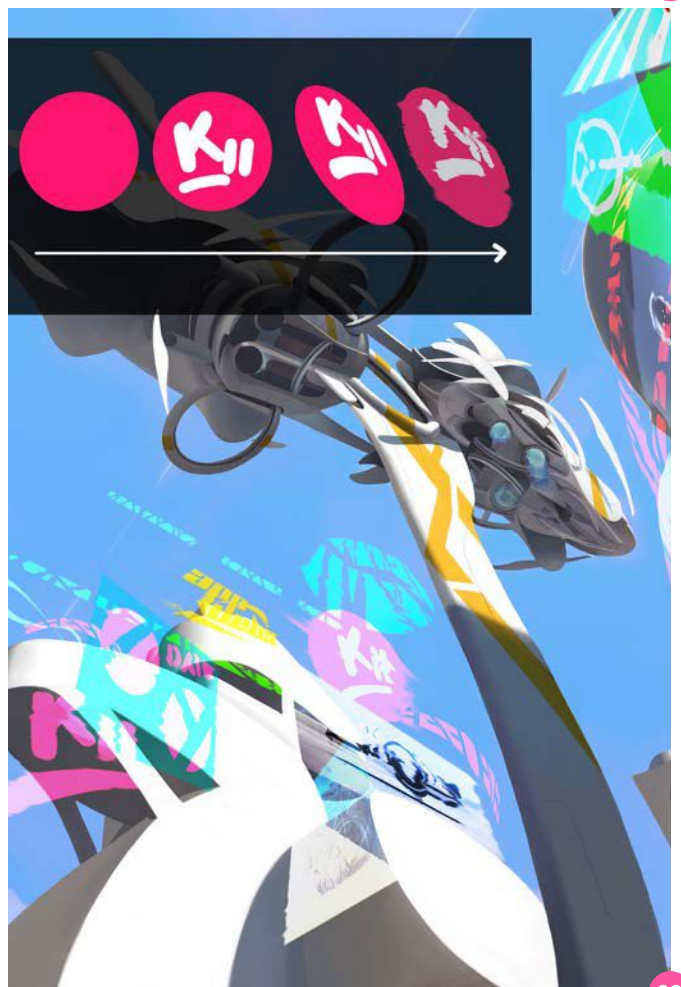
I spend some time finding different options and end with what is going to be the final design. From my previous work, *An Angel*, I decide to make some parts of the fuselage float around the spaceship, in order to look like some kind of shield.

**08 Color behavior and details:** I will keep this step as an explanation about how to understand color and light in this image. After finishing the detailing of the final form, I add some color lines to enhance the realism of the shadows.

To make the abstract yellow design, I use the layer in the Multiply mode, so when it stays over a white zone, it keeps its original brightness and tone. When it goes over the shadows, it changes automatically to a darker one,



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mixing with the blue shadow below. As you can see, the shadows are softly mixed with the color of the sky, the same way that the ground is reflected as a warm gray tone at the bottom parts.

**09 Making the holograms:** I want to give the environment a busy look, something inspired by the Shibuya crossing or Times Square. For that, and to avoid leaving the buildings without details, I fill their walls with shiny holograms, like if they were advertisements that change constantly.

The process for doing this is quite easy: first I make a simple design in a front view. After that, I transform it using the distortion option, to make it look in the same direction as our perspective. The last part is about changing the mode to Clarify or Soft Light, depending on the color we want to achieve, and deform it a bit with the Smudge tool to make the interference effect.

**10 Background, atmosphere and depth:** In this step I change the background using a royalty free cloud texture. I change the levels and saturation to make it as similar as possible to the original blue tone I had before, to make it fit with the tone of the shadows. After this, I make another layer to apply a soft gray-blue color over the parts that are farther from the point of view. With this, I enhance the feeling of



11

## ⚡ PRO TIP Learn from the masters

Try everyday to look at your favorite artist's works. Don't feel overwhelmed looking at those epic paintings, take a deep breath and try to understand how they work. When you are in a museum, try to get as close to the paintings as the security guard allows you. Study the brush strokes, the light, the color, the amount of paint, and so on.

In the same way, when I look at a digital painting, I try to zoom in as close as possible, to understand every pixel. Try to analyze it closely and look for specifics that can make you understand hidden tips. If you meet them some day, always be respectful, listen, and ask specific and bright questions!

depth. I also add some contrails at the sky, to give dynamism and increase the feeling of being a busy place full of spacecrafts.

**11 Adding glow and warm reflection:** This step, if well used, can give you that 'extra-point' to make your drawings more ▶

**07 The design is complete. Don't forget about the shadows, and try to think three-dimensionally**

**08 The color lines enhance the realism of the shadows. It is always a good idea to add some details over the surface to explain the volumes of the objects**

**09 For making the holograms you can use old personal pieces. You can experiment with different designs and forms to make new ones!**

**10 The blue-gray tone of the atmosphere can give a feeling of depth, but also works as a photograph filter to unite all the middle tones**

**11 The glow effect gives us not only an opportunity to achieve realism in the light reflection, but also to merge all the parts and colors of the illustration**





12

attractive. It consists of finding the edges between lights and shadows, and applying a soft stroke using the 'intense light' mode.

Use an orange tone in order to make a warm transition from the light to the shadow. With that effect, we show that the light front is not totally white, and that the surfaces reflect part of that light. I use this effect also on the holograms. This trick may not always occur naturally, but it can give us an interesting appeal.

**12 Engines and energy generators:** Now, I add the glow to the ring-shaped energy generators of the vehicle and the engines. To make this, I start by making a soft layer over the parts where the engines are located, to tint everything near in a blue color. After that, I apply another layer with a low opacity but stronger than the first part, and only to where the light comes from.

Finally, using the 'intense light' mode, I make the final touches until the color looks overexposed. After that, I make a copy of all the layers to merge them, and distort the warm zone with the Smudge tool. To make the holograms of the spaceship I use the same process as in the color behavior step.

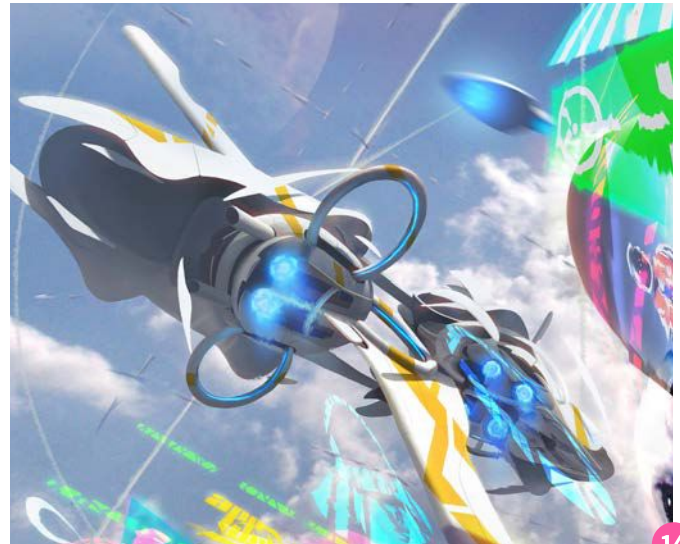
**13 Design the character:** I add a guy at the bottom of the image looking up to the spaceship, increasing the scale of the vehicle in the sky. To make it, I generate the pose in DazStudio, and export it from a view that fits with our perspective. After that, I adjust the skin tone to make it darker, since our character will be under the shadow of the buildings. Then, I change the color to make the pants, apply some texture to the clothes and finish making the hair. I add some white details to give more volume to the folds of the clothes. The last step consists of merging it with the background like we did in the background, atmosphere and depth step.

**14 Making the final details:** One of the last steps is adding some vehicles in the sky to increase the sense of hustle. To make the traffic lines and the big vehicle, I paint a rough shape, and add some glow and the same effect that I use on the engines. Don't worry if they look flat and messy.

I add some motion blur in the direction they are going, to erase the sharp edges and make them look like they are moving. This is a great tip to use in your images: use 'subliminal lines' to guide the eye through the image, so the



13



14

viewers gaze will always be 'traveling' all over the illustration, and not stuck on one focal point.

**15 The finished work:** Once I have the illustration finished, it is time for some post-production. In this step, I adjust the levels to add a bit of contrast. After that, I change the color balance to boost the warm tones (notice that the light comes from the right; if we think about it, it may be early in the morning, so the light should be warmer than a midday light). Finally, I add a layer to darken the bottom, and some film grain. ●

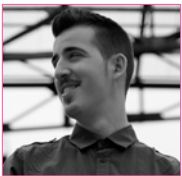
**12 All these overexposure effects, the glow and reflections can achieve a great mood in your painting. But don't abuse them unless you want an old 80s sci-fi look!**

**13 It's very important to have in mind the perspective, color value and tone in case you add new images, characters or objects during the process**

**14 Our illustration is almost finished! We could leave it like that, but there is still more we can do**



## The Artist



**Pablo Carpio**

[artstation.com/artist/pablocarpio](https://artstation.com/artist/pablocarpio)





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## The Artist



**Sung Choi**


[sung-choi.com](http://sung-choi.com)

**Software Used:**

Photoshop, MODO

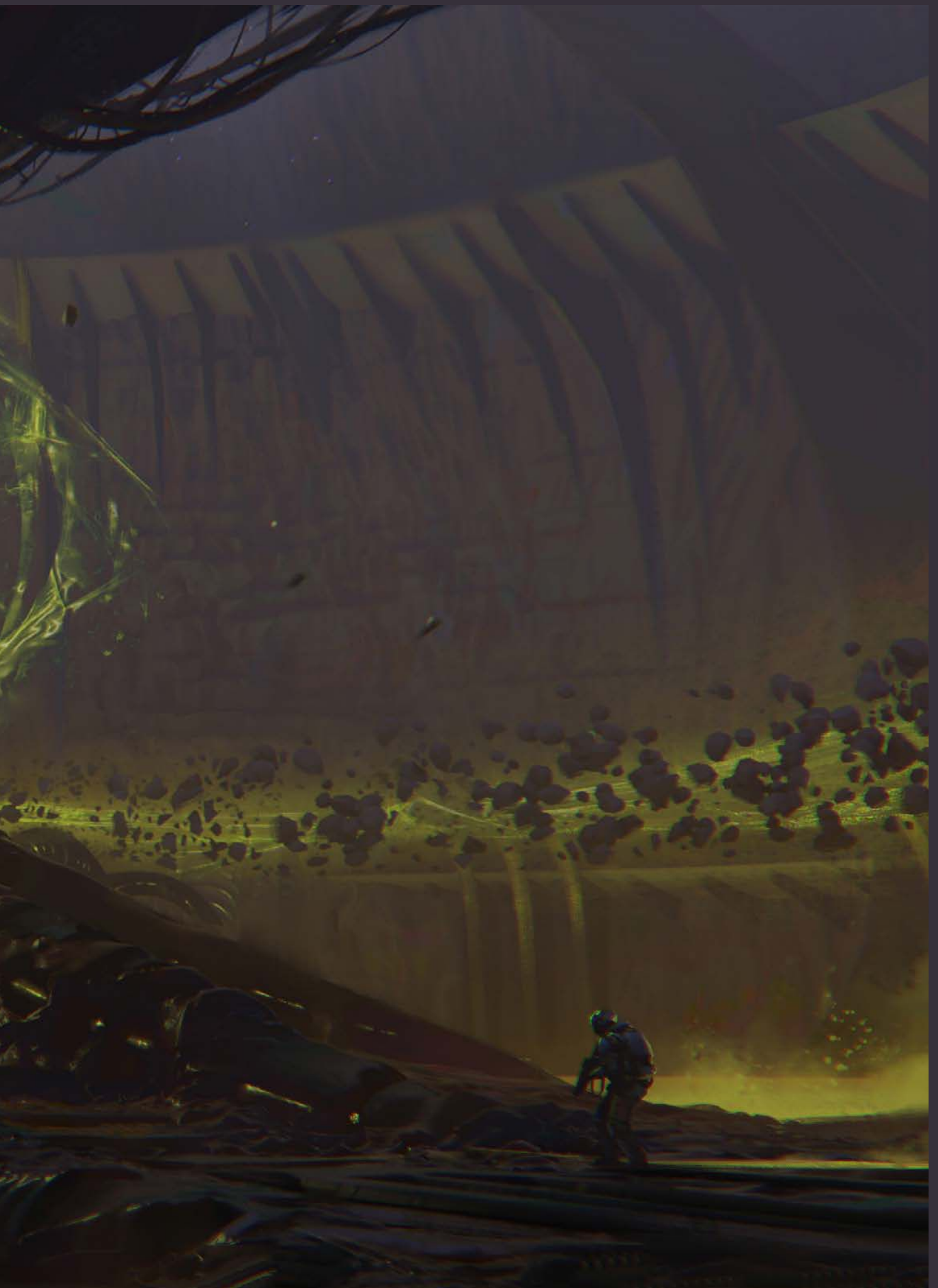
Sung Choi (Sunhun Choi) is an award-winning concept artist from South Korea currently working at Bungie, Washington. He specializes in world design and illustration for the entertainment industry.

# Design an alien power source

Combining 2D and 3D software, Sung Choi created this dramatic sci-fi scene inspired by the natural world. Here he describes his processes for 2dartist 







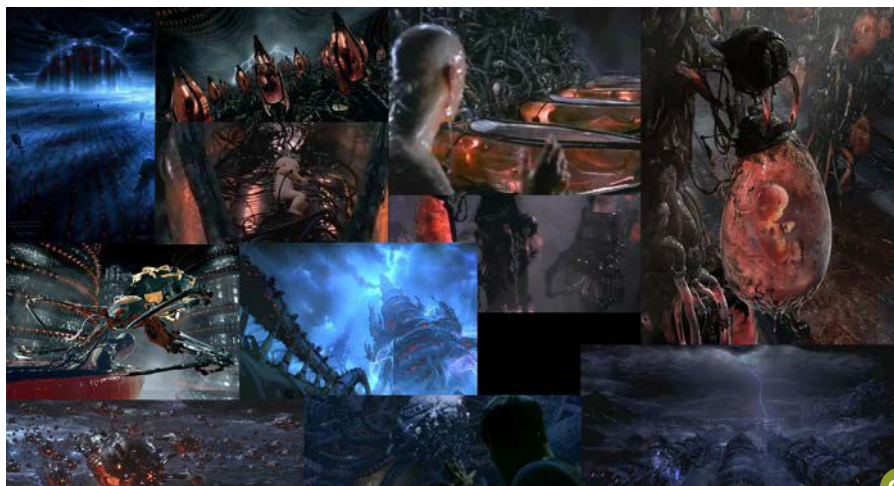


## See how you too can create a dynamic alien image...

This project overview shows how to create a conceptual illustration, starting from gathering inspirations and sketching out designs, to using 3D to help sell the idea. The examples show you some of my thought process when I designed an alien power generator, and include the reference sheets, sketches and renders I used.

For my personal project *ARK*, I wanted to create an alien power source that runs a gigantic alien ship. As one of my series of illustrations, this image *The Heart* had to have a consistent quality to match other images for the *ARK* project.

First I gathered some images as a style guide that includes whatever inspires me for this power source. It was hard to find references from real life – it had to look like something not of this planet. So, I decided to design it by mixing some cool essences from living references such as horseshoe crabs and jellyfish. These helped me to imagine what the materials and shapes would be. I had it in mind that since this piece was all about showing the mood and design of the power generator, the composition should be very simple, so I decided to figure out lighting and composition in 3D. It was a bit of a long process for me in general but it was great to go through step by step.



**01 Gathering inspirational references:** To begin a new piece, it's always good to have a brief art direction. I started to gather some inspirations from films and photos to find what kind of style I wanted to have on my alien power generator. What I liked from the research was the designs of mechanics in the movie *The Matrix*; the way they designed the robots to have very organic outer shapes and complex mechanism within the shells. The procedural liquids they have on their joints were also really inspiring. Then I narrowed down the style to be more organic but with a hard surface.

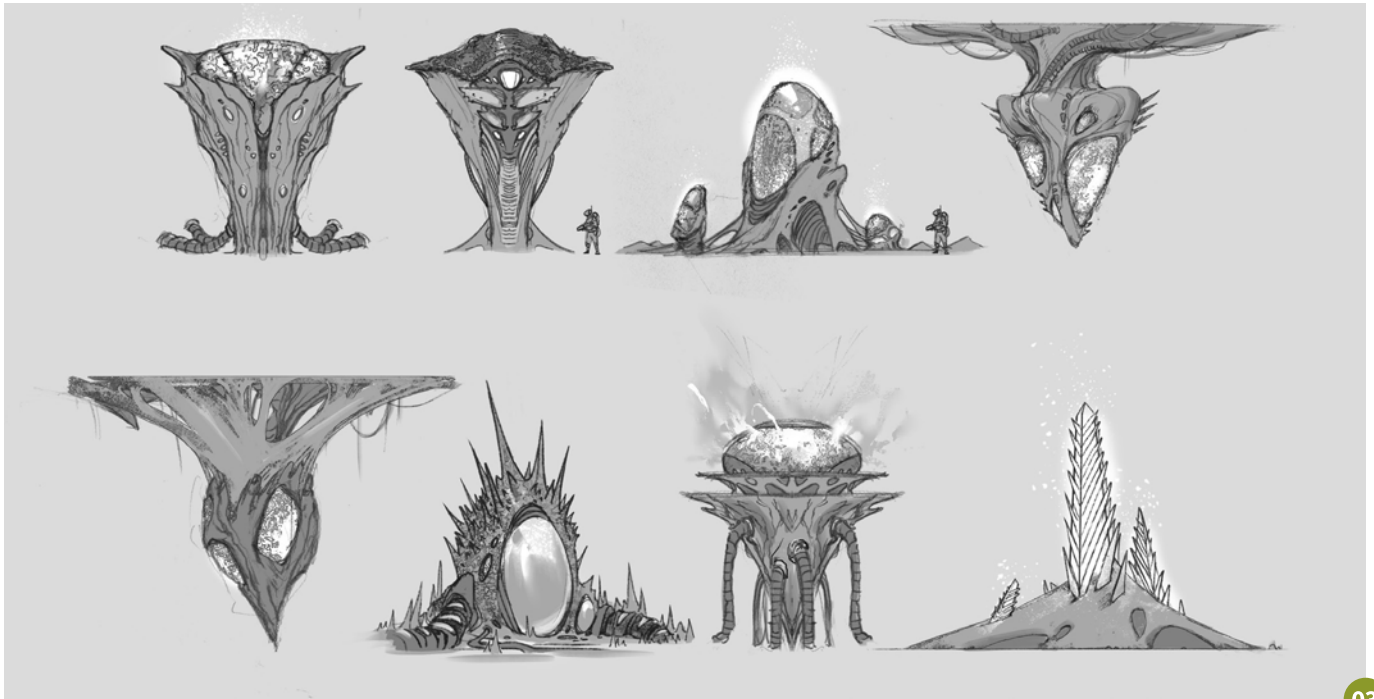
**02 Finding existing references:** After I had gathered inspirational images for my brief, I started to find some references that are grounded in real life. Looking at real references helps me to come up with some ideas that are

more realistic. Throughout the research, I found that I liked the shape of the horseshoe crab and its hard shell that covers soft organs underneath it. The balance between two materials was well organized and pretty. During the search I kept trying to analyze what I liked about the image and why I liked them because these questions will help me to keep the essence of my inspirations in my final image.

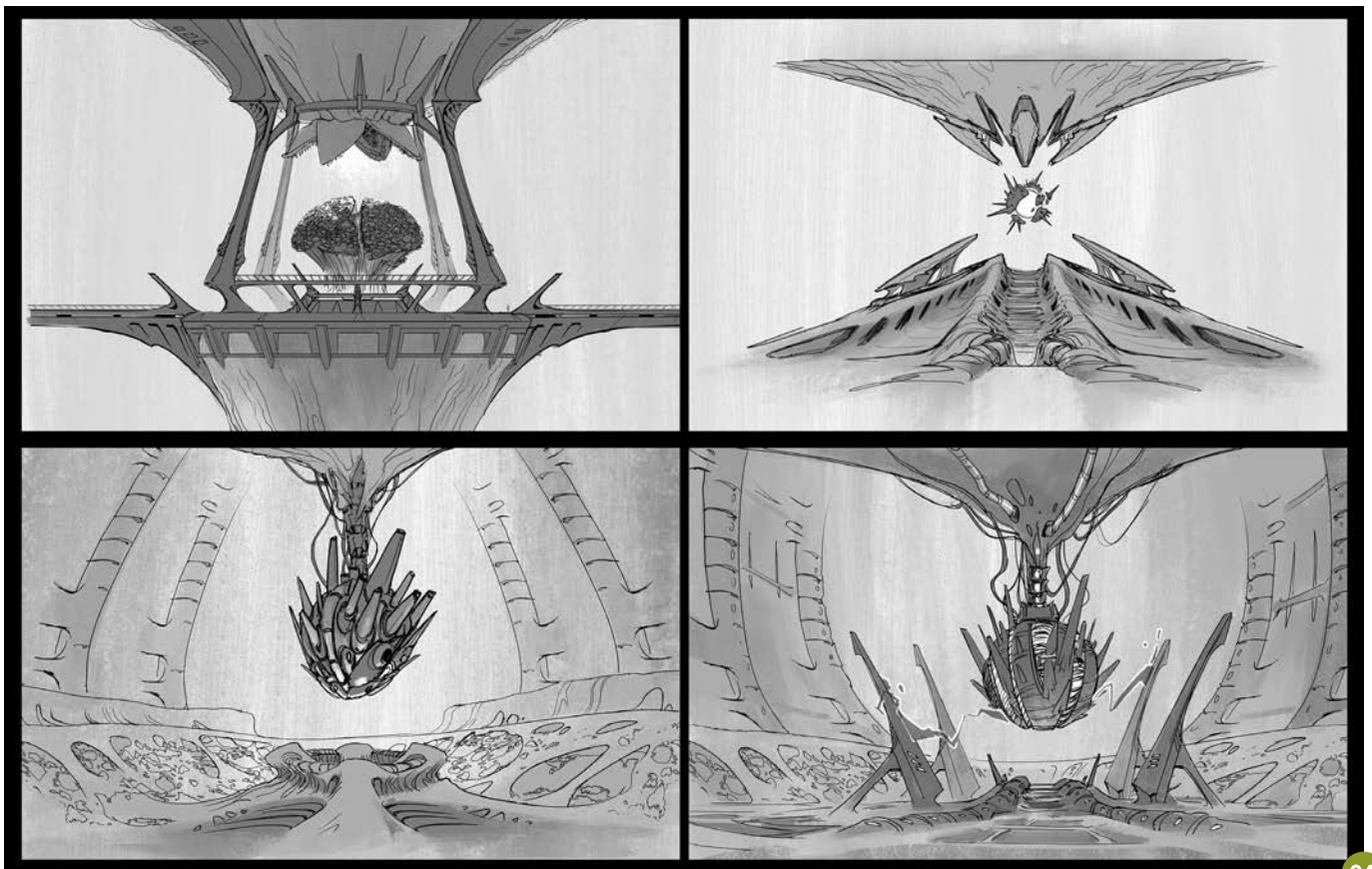
**03 An exploration on shapes:** Once I had some references and ideas in my mind, I started off with some line sketches to see what kind of design it would be. This phase is very loose so I tend to do lots of rough sketches that are from my thoughts. On this step I didn't design what the overall chamber would look like, but thought what the actual generator could be. It could be made out of organic shells covering







03



04

liquid alien materials, or it could be an egg that supplies energy through the ship. There were more rough sketches, but I have selected to show you some that were more presentable. These are normally really rough.

**04 Thinking as a whole:** I started to think about the whole chamber; where it holds the generator in the middle. This step is also very

rough but shows some options I could choose. I used Wacom Cintiq for lines and added some local tones on those designs. I thought that the interior could be made out of organic materials or have some mechanism with a hard surface. I also tried to emphasize some simple shapes for when I designed the compositions. During this phase, lighting came up as a question as well, but I was starting to see some ideas narrowed down. ►

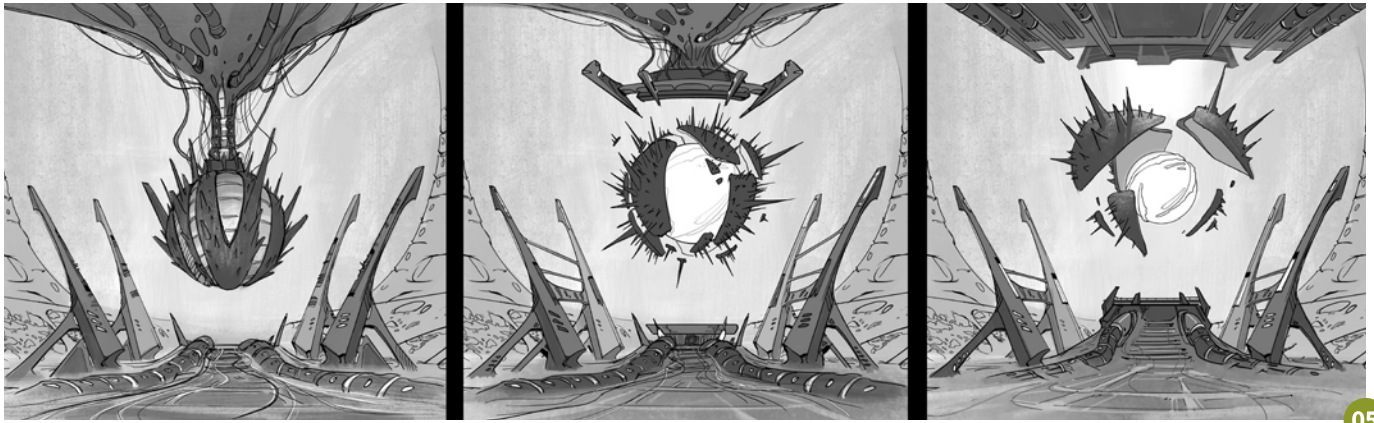
**01 Inspirational references as a style guide**

**02 References that exist in the real world**

**03 Rough line sketches for the generator**

**04 Sketches for the whole power generator chamber**



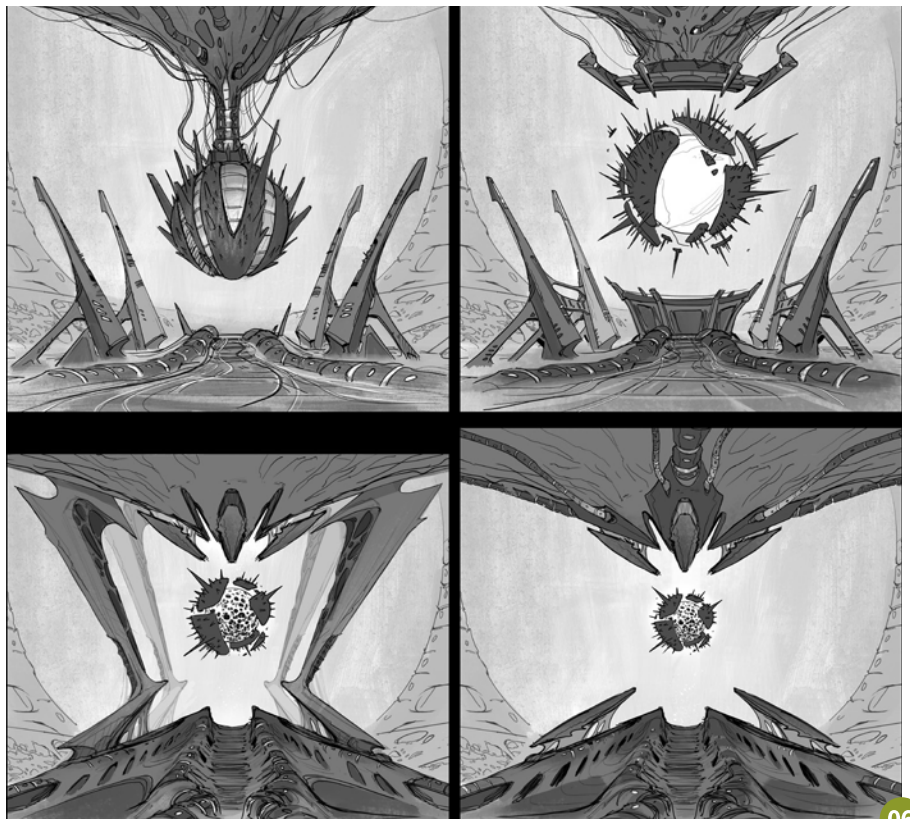


05

**05 Iteration of mechanical structures:** After I came up with four different ideas for the power generator, I did some more in-depth sketches of the generator with mechanical structures. I thought the idea was interesting so I did one more round of sketching out how that generator could sit on the structures that are surrounding it.

The first idea was making it as a heart that's expanding and shrinking. The second idea was having some shells surrounding its main power source. The last one was very similar to the second one but more expanded with larger shapes. I also decided the lighting should be coming out from the power source.

**06 Narrow down ideas:** I stepped out from the mechanical structure idea and added another option, which was one of my sketches that had more organic materials overall. The ideas I took from my previous step were lighting and floating shells. While I was doing these sketches, I felt that having some mechanical structures around the power source would be a bit generic. So I developed the organic



06

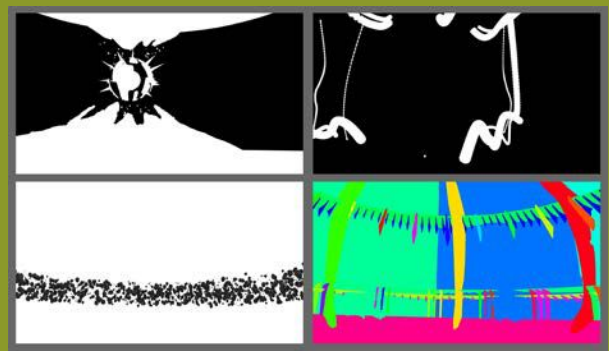
## ⚡ PRO TIP

### Export a rendered image

There are several ways to bring in a rendered image separately. Depending on the complexity of my render, I use Surface ID or create a render pass which allows you to set different renders at once. Surface ID can be found in a Final Color output as an output option. I use this when I have a scene that is very simple, so that I can easily color pick them in Photoshop and pick the selection from my original fully rendered image.

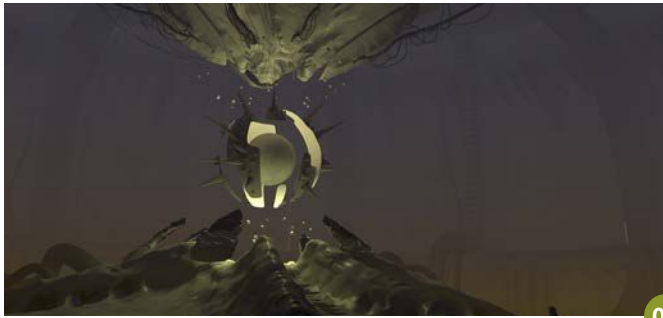
I also prefer render passes because I can get a clear PNG image from different objects in the scene. Also, I prefer adding item shaders to render a background, having all the shadows from the objects. It would be much faster if you could just search them in Google if you didn't know about them before.

Constantly questioning and searching for the solutions are a good way to learn and discover new skills. That's how I learned all of my toolset.



▲ Export rendered images by using render passes or surface ID





idea by having strong angular shapes, which help the composition and lighting by pointing at the generator. Next to the floating power source, I added another layer of shell which I brought from the idea of the horseshoe crabs. I decided on having some hard organic shells instead of mechanical structures.

**07 Modeling in MODO:** MODO is one of my favorite tools. It has a great rendering quality and it's easy to learn. In this step, I modeled the power generator based on the design I chose from my previous step. Since I had to create organic shapes, I used a sculpting brush from the Paint tab. It has a better quality if you turn on the Multi-res since it works as DynaMesh in ZBrush.

I modeled a large shape first then started to carve them carefully to make it as I wanted. After setting up the environment color and fog, I added two lights both on top and below the power source to experiment how the lighting would work. I chose the most stable angle where there was a clear view of how the power source looks.

**08 Adding materials in MODO:** Once I had a solid model and the camera angle in MODO, I added materials and textures on to meshes. I had to go through references again to understand what materials they had. A jellyfish's skin has a transparency and slime that

was perfect for some organic shapes I had. So I assigned some parts of the ground to be solid shell, and organic parts to have more specular and subsurface transparency. I normally tend to assign as many materials as possible to make the scene more realistic. After I had the general material arrangements, I reviewed them one by one and carefully changed the thresholds to make it as realistic as possible.

**09 Painting in Photoshop:** I rendered the image in separate layers from MODO then brought them into Photoshop (see my top tip for details). After that, I started to add some photos and effects that I had in my mind.

It is very important to plan out what could be done in 3D and what could be done in Photoshop. If I wanted to make strange alien effects in MODO, I would have spent more time on just researching how to do it. Understanding what can be done fast and easily will save you lots of time. It's all a matter of understanding our own pipeline which comes from experience.

So, I made the power source more transparent to show more strange movement of energy inside, and added a green overwhelming energy to make it more dramatic.

**10 Finishing the image:** After getting everything that I needed from my

previous steps, it was now time to paint! I emphasized the lighting to be brighter so that it lightens the overall key. After working back and forth, I realized that I had an opportunity on the background to bring a more dramatic mood. Then I added some floating debris around the 'Heart' that constantly storm on a certain level. This also gave me a great chance to show the silhouette of the foundation structure. I also painted some soft organic skins under the shell.

The character has to be well-posed, rather than being a stiff character model I had from 3D. Luckily I had a design in mind for the character, so all I did was get the pose from a photo and paint my character on top of it. After that I spent more and more time painting over the scene, but not losing the details I got from using 3D, to sell my idea clearly. ●

**05 Iteration sketches for the power generator**

**06 The last sketches to find out what the concept could be**

**07 Modeling and sculpting the power generator**

**08 Assigning materials on meshes**

**09 Adding effects can be done easily in 2D**



## The Artist

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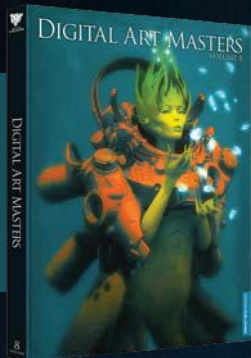
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DIGITAL ART MASTER:

# Working Droid

by Brian Sum

Discover how this light infused sci-fi scene was created in this sneak peek from *Digital Art Masters: Volume 8* ▶





## The Artist



**Brian Sum**  
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**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

Brian Sum is a game concept artist based in Montreal, Quebec. He specializes in sci-fi concepts and has worked on titles such as *Mass Effect 2* and *3*, *Sonic Chronicles* and *Shadowrun*.



### Concept

I've always liked the idea of deep-sea exploration vehicles like the one from the movie *The Abyss* and James Cameron's *Deepsea Challenge*. I thought I'd try an exploration vehicle along those lines, but with a touch of sci-fi.

This explorer would have mech legs so it could navigate hard to reach places and smaller arms to sample minerals. I wanted this vehicle to be able to explore alien environments as well as being an underwater explorer, so it needed to feel solid and sturdy, and be able to withstand all kinds of extreme conditions.

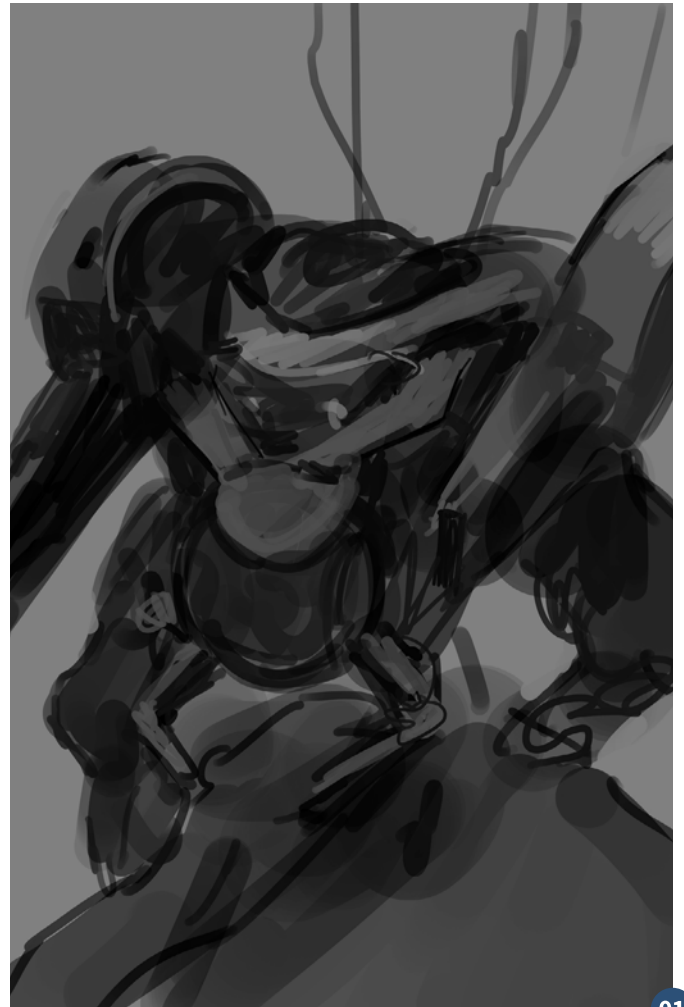
### Blocking

Photoshop is the program of choice for most of the work I do. I'll use 3D programs sometimes to help block in elements in my scene, but when it comes to the painting stage, Photoshop is my favorite. I began blocking in shapes with a standard Round brush in grayscale (Fig.01).

Since this was intended to be a cover piece, I made sure I left room for the title at the top. During this stage, I was mostly thinking about broad overall shapes, composition and the flow of the piece.

I started throwing in rough colors at this point. I wanted my focal point to be around the lower central position. The cockpit was facing downwards and the larger outer navigational arms/wings were angled in a way that helped direct the viewer around this focal area (Fig.02).

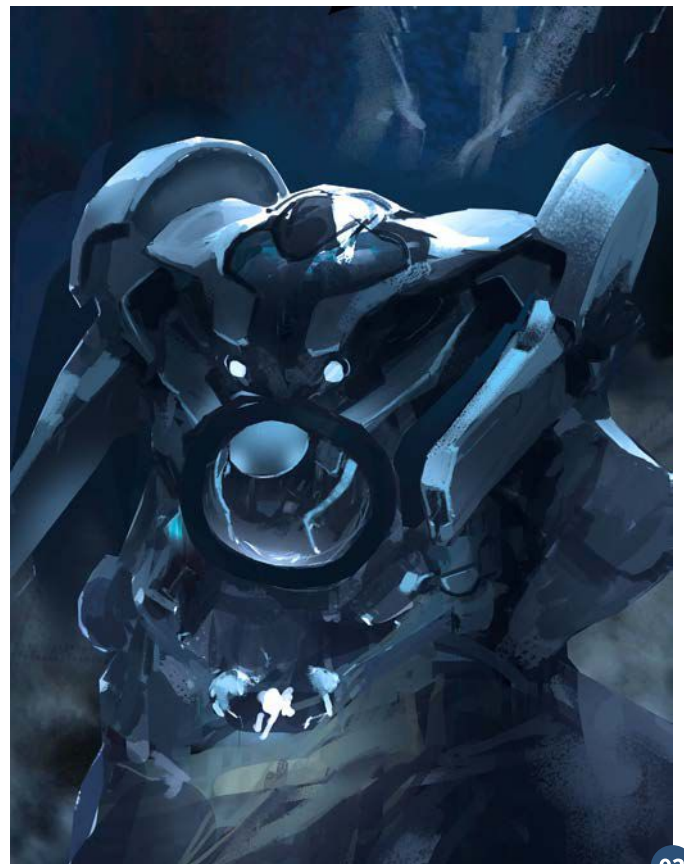
Once the main image was blocked in, I separated the images into their main layers. I then divided the image into a background layer, a rock layer and the main exploration vehicle layer, as this helped keep things clean and organized when painting over each area.



01

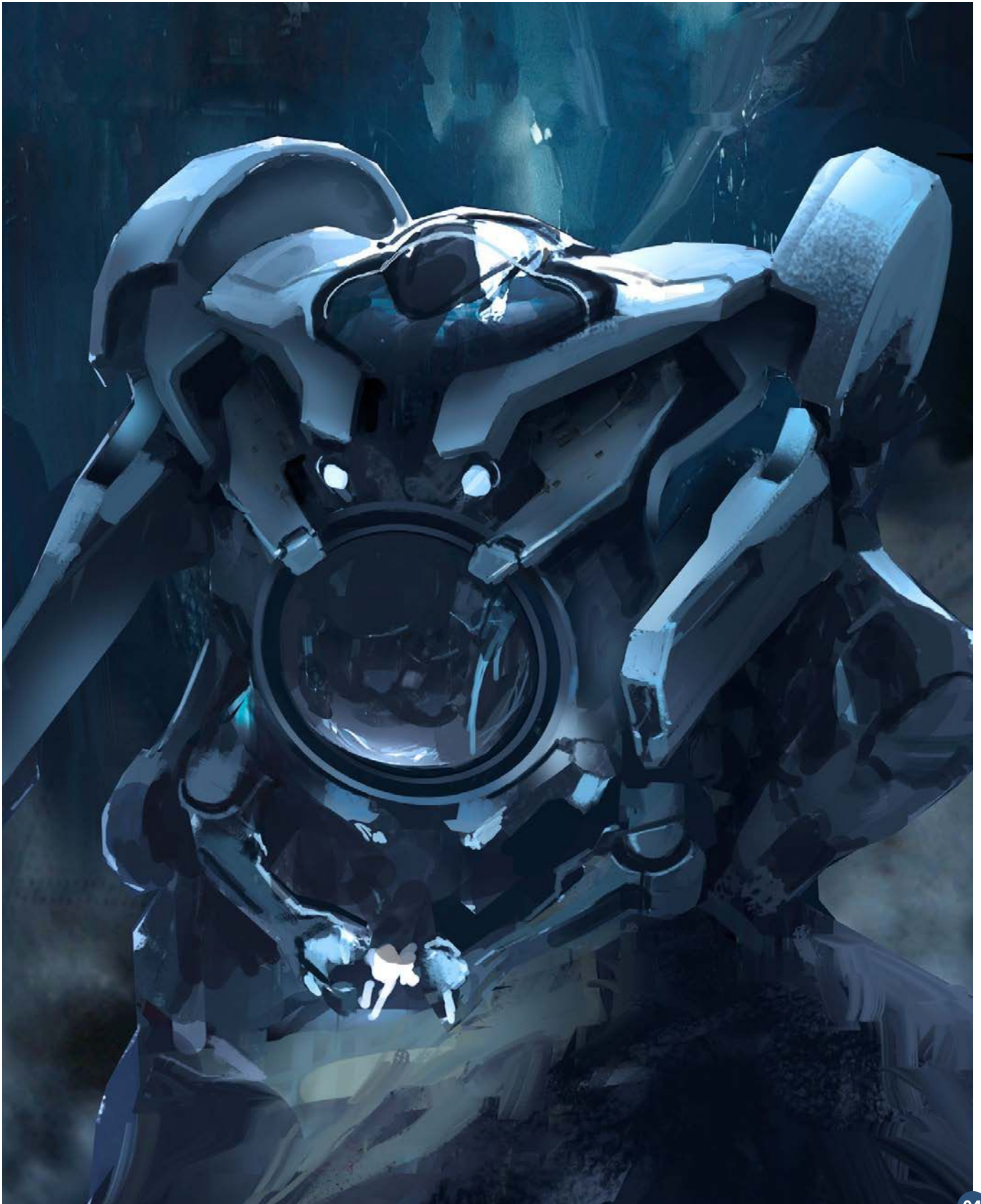


02



03





04

### Color and detail

At this stage I decided that I wanted to limit my color palette to more blueish tones with some accent colors (Fig.03). So I started playing around with the Hue/Saturation and Curves tools to get the general tones I wanted. I then began to

define the shapes more, always aware of the composition of the larger elements in relation to the overall piece.

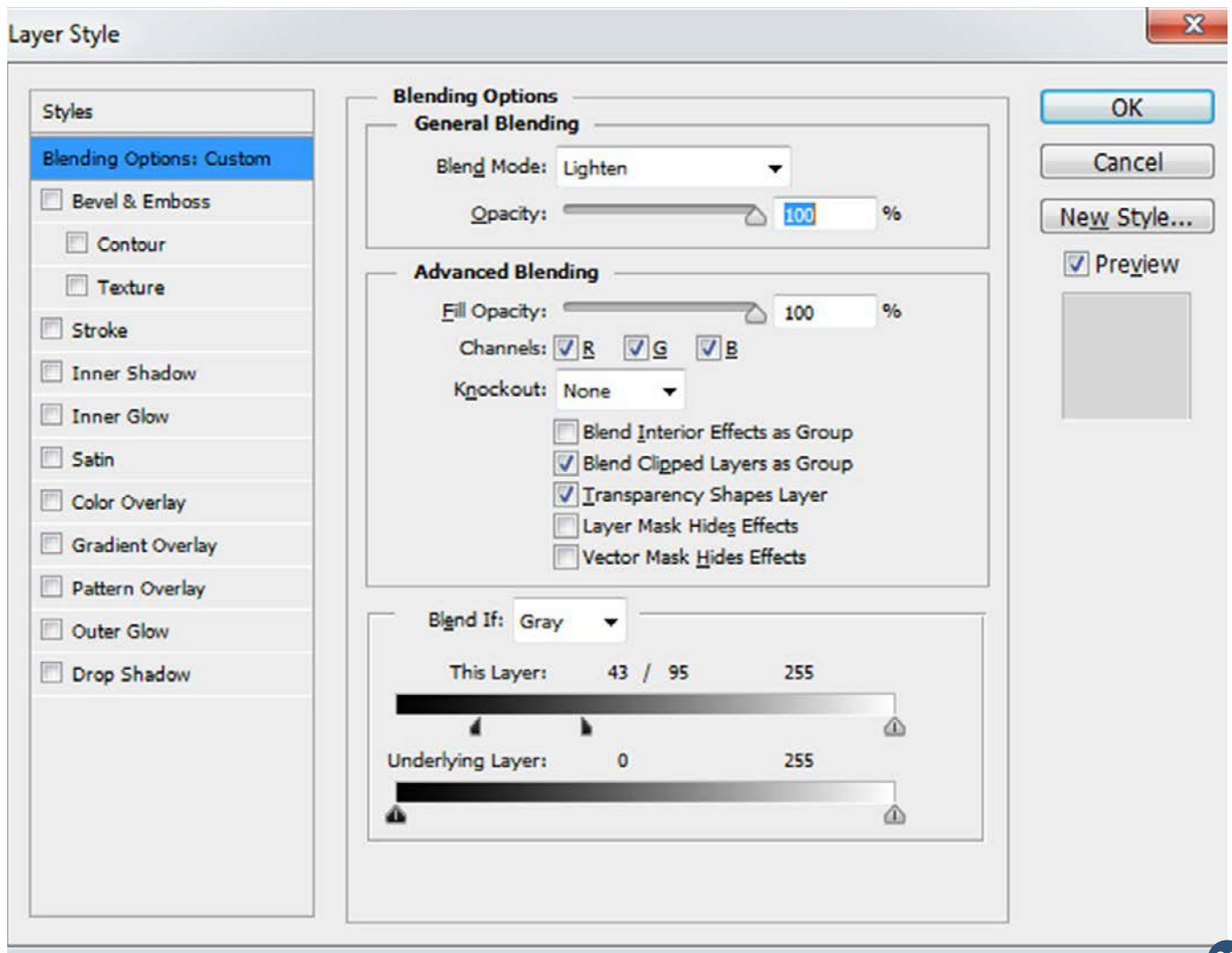
The round, bulbous cockpit in the center needed to be a lot more accurate, so I used the circular

Marquee tool and added a Stroke to it to get a thickness, after which I transformed/skewed it to get the correct perspective. I also enlarged the spherical cockpit a bit as I wanted to get the reflective details on the glass and make it an area of interest (Fig.04). ►









06

**“All the essentials were there now and the next step was to go back in and start polishing. I knew from the beginning that I didn’t want this piece to be photorealistic”**

I then added in some rock textures and lights, and could see things coming to life (Fig.05). I used the Blend Options tool on the textures to make them a little smoother. In the Blend Options tool menu, I adjusted the black sliders on the ‘This Layer’ attribute, which gradually faded out any darks that may have been on that layer. Alternatively, moving the white sliders will fade out any lighter spots (Fig.06).

I wasn’t happy with the shape of the rocks as they looked a little too round, so I reshaped them in a way that reinforced the general flow of the piece (Fig.07). I also rearranged the lights to highlight the focal area more, and added a lens flare texture set to Lighten blending mode. I also added an abstract texture layer set to Overlay above most of my main layers to give the piece texture and subtle color variation (Fig.08). ▶



07



### Polishing

I was pretty happy with the overall color tones and design at this point. All the essentials were there now and the next step was to go back in and start polishing. I knew from the beginning that I didn't want this piece to be photorealistic.

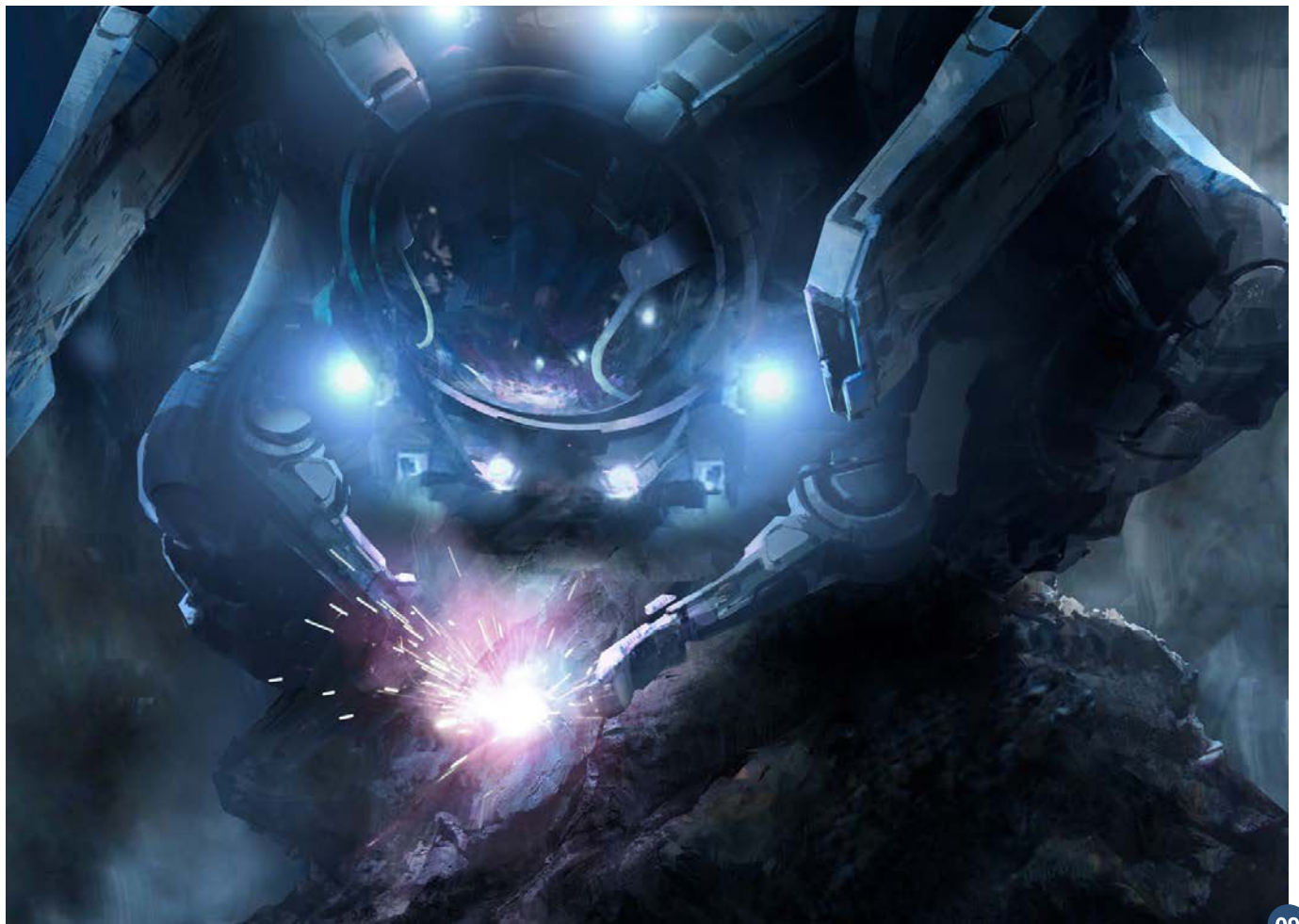
I wanted to retain some loose, painterly elements, so I painted in areas that needed some more texture. I often find that the reason some pieces don't feel very realistic is because the surfaces are too smooth.

It was always my intention to have the arms drilling something, so I eventually added this detail. The different color tone further enhanced this focal point (Fig.09). Finally, I added a Brightness/Contrast layer with a mask, then airbrushed in the areas that I wanted to remain in shadow.

I have a habit of wanting to detail everything in the image, but this usually destroys the realism. It's better to leave areas in the shadows somewhat abstract to allow the viewer to fill in the blanks. ●



08



09



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The background is a digital painting of a red, hooded figure, possibly a Sith Lord, standing in a futuristic, industrial environment with green and blue lighting. The figure is wearing a red hood and a red robe, and is holding a glowing yellow object. The overall style is painterly and dramatic.

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